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INTIMATE PRUSSIA

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By

A. RAYMOND

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NOTE.

THE sketch entitled "Tragedy" (p. 141) was first published in the *Daily Express* (in a somewhat different form), and is now included in this collection by the courtesy of Mr. R. D. Blumenfeld, Editor of that paper.

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INTIMATE PRUSSIA.

APOLOGY.

"WHO said rats?" was the title of a once widely popular picture of an alert Irish terrier.

"Who said Germans?" does, and will for a long time to come, aptly phrase the attitude of John of the bull-dog breed whenever he scents "Kultur."

Hence this apology.

Some years ago a young English student, having drunk in the course of his "wander-years" at the fountains of wisdom in Heidelberg, Halle, and Leipzig, arrived at Berlin. He had heard much of the "soul of Germany," and was looking for it. He had gathered some notes on Bavarians, Saxons, Rhinelanders, and was now come to learn something of the Prussians, whose reputation in southern Germany

he knew to be very unsavoury. He hoped ultimately to be able to integrate his collected and classified differentiæ into something like an intelligible idea of the German character as a whole.

Berlin disappointed him. There were plenty of Prussians there, but they seemed to be wandering off after false gods—gods that their Prussian forefathers knew not. The Berlin Prussian he found to be a mixture of crude imitations. He affected the cynicism of the Parisian, the pride of the Briton, and the sensibility of the Italian, concealing his real nature beneath a variable coat of unconvincing mannerisms.

So the English student took up again the long list of German universities to see if there were any respectable ones in Prussia proper. His eye stuck at Königsberg, and he was astonished to find in north-eastern Germany a university with over a thousand students. He had to look at a map to find out where Königsberg was, and was again surprised to discover how far the Prussian octopus had stretched its north-eastern arm around the corner of the Baltic to cut off its Russian neighbour from the sea.

Of the friends he consulted, only one had ever been through Königsberg, and that one, on his way to Russia, had not troubled to leave the train. He knew all about Vladivostock, but Königsberg . . . ! He shrugged his shoulders in helpless ignorance. Who ever went to Königsberg ?

It occurred to the English student that there, clear out of the ordinary run of the tourist, he might, perhaps, find Prussianism pure and undefiled. So early one morning he betook himself to the Friedrichstrasse station, and by good fortune obtained a window-seat in a third-class carriage, where he settled down for the long, ten-hour journey. The tedium of the trip exceeded even his anticipations, for the country, as viewed through the window of a train, looks quite as toneless and uninviting as it appears on the map. No mountains, no vineyards, no cities. Rifts of white sand gleaming through the sparse vegetation. Flat, barren fields and rectangular blocks of pine trees, all of a size, standing in perfectly straight lines like files and battalions of Prussian grenadiers.

It was hard for him to realise that he was passing through the heart of Prussia, the Prussia of Frederick the Great, which had triumphantly

defied the rest of Europe and slipped out from between the upper and nether mill-stone, unbroken and unbreakable. Bismarck smelted that flinty kernel of Prussian nationality into his Prussia of "blood and iron." It was almost impossible to believe that these sandy wastes harboured millions of people, trained and disciplined to act without question and suffer almost without complaint; that a single "might-word" could in a single night fill those vast vacancies with endless forests of bristling bayonets; that here, amid these peaceful villages, lay coiled up in fierce tension a mighty Power, ready at the signal to spring across Europe at a bound, and fix its fangs in the throat of the world.

Perhaps the English student thought vaguely some such thoughts as these as the train rumbled on, hour after hour, stopping now and then at overgrown villages like Kreutz, Schneidemühle, and Konitz. Between Dirshau and Marienburg the line crosses the two mouths of the Vistula, which loses impressiveness by the division. And here he received the first intimation that Prussia is no place for absent-minded triflers in the form of a sharp rebuke from the ticket-collector for giving up the wrong section of his tourist's ticket.

Towards evening, almost without warning, he found himself in Königsberg, and was glad to note, by the hugeness of the station and the number and splendour of the tram-cars outside, that he was in a real city again. After the unavoidable extravagance of a night in the nearest hotel, he went out to look for a room.

He was surprised to find a city larger than Magdeburg and cleaner than Dresden. The uniform good clothing of everyone he met made him think it must be Sunday. He learned later that you must look a long time to find a tramp or a slattern in Königsberg; that compulsory bathing and merciless caning can keep even the poorest school-children in a state of immaculate spruceness; and that it is possible for factory-hands and servant girls to dress almost as well as their employers and mistresses if they devote all their energies to that end. The Prussian machine can take almost any kind of material and grind into it some very useful qualities. It is hardly right to call the process an *educational* one, for the desired characteristics are superimposed upon the existing foundation rather than *educed* from it.

The English student turned from the Vorstadt into Georgstrasse and soon caught sight of a

Moblirtes Zimmer sign in a third-storey window of a plain looking set of flats. At the top of three flights of stairs he met a substantial, somewhat grim, but not altogether unmotherly-looking woman, who called herself Frau Meyer. The large front room was well furnished and immaculate, so he quickly arranged to pay Frau Meyer thirty marks (30s.) a month for its use, this price including the usual Prussian breakfast of a cup of coffee and a buttered bun.

He was used to making himself at home under all circumstances, so he soon discovered that the Meyer family included the father, a railway-porter; the mother, already mentioned; a son of twenty-two, Curt, who was half-way through the medical course; and two daughters, Gretchen and Trudchen, aged eighteen and fifteen respectively. He was astonished to learn that the father earned from three to five pounds weekly. To this the girls added a pound or so by sewing umbrellas for Wertheims. They had chosen this occupation because they could work in their own homes on their own machines, and were thus independent of business hours and free from the stigma of being factory-hands. The son was getting his share of the family earnings by taking a medical course, while the girls had a

couple of thousand marks each in the savings-bank towards their marriage dowries, and were regularly adding a few hundred each year.

On the day after his arrival, the English student went to the Police Station, handed in the *Abmeldeschein* given him by the Berlin police, and waited, thinking that would suffice. But he soon discovered that he was no longer in easy-going old Bavaria, where even a slight English accent used to be a sufficient passport for anyone. The official waited also, evidently expecting something more, and when it was not forthcoming, he boomed out: "Where are your other papers, your birth certificate, your military permit, etc.?"

"I'm not eligible for military service," said the English student, mildly, in sufficiently good German not to betray his alien origin.

"Not eligible? What *zum Donnerwetter* do you mean? Show me your papers at once!"

The man's fat, red face began to swell, and there was every sign of an imminent explosion.

"But I'm an Englishman," said the other, still more mildly, remembering that a soft answer is supposed to turn away wrath.

"An Englishman! Oh, you're the Englishman! Why didn't you say so at once, then?

Why didn't you come last night, immediately on your arrival? We've been looking for you! Where is your passport? "

"I've left it in my room. I didn't think it would be necessary, but I can fetch it at once, if you wish. It has not usually been required."

"Not required? I suppose you haven't been in Königsberg before, then? Let me tell you that you're in PRUSSIA now, and we don't understand any jokes of that sort. Wait there for a moment."

Presently a uniformed, sabre-armed policeman entered the corridor through a side door.

"This officer will accompany you to your room," explained the voice from within, "where you will get your papers and return here immediately. If you make any attempt to escape I shall not be responsible for the consequences."

On the way to the Georgstrasse, the Englishman, as a student of nature in all its forms, attempted to enter into conversation with his escort, but was cut off with a sharp, monosyllabic command. The officer accompanied him into his room, but did not offer to touch his belongings, although he looked carefully all

around, and spoke a few words in an undertone to Frau Meyer, who looked on from the bedroom door, the rest of the family in the background.

No fault could be found with the passport, but the alien had to wait while it was sent to the resident English Consular Agent (luckily there happened to be one) to be vised. While the messenger was gone, the English student was subjected to a searching cross-examination by two officials as to his object in coming to Germany, and in particular to Königsberg. He was required to give a complete list of all the places in Germany at which he had resided, with the dates of his residence as far as possible, and his address at each place. Luckily he had the presence of mind not to mention any of the places where he had forgotten to register, for presently he heard the dictation of telegrams to the various towns he had mentioned, asking for confirmation of his statements.

Altogether the business lasted some three hours, and he was finally dismissed with the caution not to leave the city nor change his address without giving immediate notice. He knew this could not legally be required; but thought it best not to press the point, as he wished to reside in the city for some time.

A few months later he happened to meet the official who had attended to him, at a social function, and was surprised to find him an agreeable, jolly, and not altogether uncultured companion. But he could see nothing amusing in his official conduct, and when the English student unwisely attempted a joke on the subject, he drew himself up stiffly, and turned abruptly away.

The English student spent parts of several years in hard study at the great university made famous by the names of Kant and Caspari, but he learned more about Prussianism by watching the doings of the Meyers. He was ready to oblige them by giving up the use of his room for festive occasions, and they in turn invited him to share their outings and other pleasures. At first he hesitated about watching the silhouettes to be seen through the pane of ground glass in the door which separated his room from the little inner windowless bedroom in which most of the Meyers slept, which room opened through a wide door into the large dining and living-room beyond, but he soon found that the Meyers thought of him very much as they would of a child, or a dog, and were quite indifferent as to whether he peeped or not, troubling neither to

close the door nor to lower their voices when family crises were on. So he listened often, and sometimes looked—as a student, of course—and the following sketches are an attempt to depict faithfully and accurately the doings, thoughts, and ideals of a class of people who have made and are making history, but are as yet little known and less understood by the English-speaking races. The impressions are recorded as they came to the writer. The earlier ones are very fragmentary, but if the reader will persevere, perhaps he will find something more complete and satisfactory later on. The incidents described and characters sketched are not only based on actual observations, but in nearly every case they are typical of large classes of the population of Königsberg and other towns of East Prussia, where a ruthless, mechanical system of civilisation has formed a hard and highly-polished shell upon a core of receptive, but still rather crude, mediæval barbarism. The chapter called "In the *Frauenklinik*" is included because it illustrates a phase of life which takes up a good deal of attention in Königsberg. The brutality of hospital physicians towards poor patients, and the daring and dangerous experiments often performed, are frequently the subject of wide-spread gossip and

excitement. Perhaps a study of the traits of these people will throw some light on the mystery of Germany's extraordinary conduct in the present war; but even if not, the English student hopes that the thoughtful, unprejudiced English reader will find these sketches not without interest and profit.

HOME SCENES.

I.—FIVE A.M.

"GET up, Man!" called Frau Meyer, "it's gone five o'clock."

"*Ja, ja!*" grunted a sleepy voice from the inner room. Herr Meyer turned over in bed, but got no further in his efforts to rouse himself. His wife put the finishing touches to the white, muslin frock she was ironing, and hung it carefully away in the large wardrobe behind the door. Then she broke half a dozen eggs into a bowl, and began to beat them up. But when, after a few moments, a deep, regular snore began to resound above the clatter of her spoon, she set the bowl down sharply, and went into the bedroom.

"Get up!" she said, shaking her husband's shoulder, and pulling off the bed-clothes; "it's nearly half-past five."

Herr Meyer rolled out with another grunt. "Half-past five? I told you to wake me at five sharp!"

"And haven't I called you a dozen times? I had your boots cleaned and your clothes brushed half an hour ago. Get into your trousers, and your pan-cake will be ready in two minutes."

Herr Meyer came out into the dining-room, and caught sight of his son sleeping half dressed on the sofa.

"What time did Curt get home last night?" he demanded.

Frau Meyer managed to pour the eggs into the hot frying-pan just as he spoke, and the resulting sizzle enabled her to ignore the question. Her husband repeated it in a sharper tone.

"He was here before you were," answered his wife. "Didn't you see him lying on the sofa when you came in?"

Herr Meyer did not care to betray the indistinctness of his home-coming recollections. He looked at the young man critically.

"Did you notice if he smelt of drink?" he asked. Curt was sleeping very soundly in spite of the noise around.

"Smell him yourself!" retorted Frau Meyer. Herr Meyer dropped the subject and picked up his lunch basket, into which his wife had packed sandwiches, sausage, and the egg pan-cake.

"Aren't you going to eat your buttered bun?" she asked.

"No time. You woke me too late." He swallowed the cup of coffee, swore because it was too hot, stuck the buttered bun into his pocket, and stumbled out of the room.

"If my husband only didn't drink," soliloquised Frau Meyer with a heavy sigh, "he'd be the best and kindest man in the world!"

Then she slipped a wide cape over her shoulders, went over to the little shop opposite, bought half a dozen bottles of beer, and set them in the darkest corner of the cellar to cool for dinner.

HOME SCENES.

II.—Table Talk.

"Herr Pfennigfinder was here again this morning," remarked Frau Meyer, as soon as she had finished serving the noonday dinner. She had laid on each plate a slice of roast beef, a little pile of potatoes, and a dab of black currant jam, while over the whole she poured rich, sour-cream sauce.

"Yes," put in Gretchen, "and mother had a great fight with him. Trudchen and I stood

behind the door, and we could hardly keep from giggling."

"I can believe that!" said the father, dryly; "but how did you get rid of him, Mother?"

"He's coming again on Sunday morning, when you're here," said Frau Meyer; "he won't believe that your income is only a thousand marks a year."

"Let him prove that it's more!" replied Herr Meyer hotly. "It's enough to drive one wild! Mind you put on your old clothes next Sunday. The girls had better keep out of the way."

"He asked Herr Marquardt how he could afford roast veal on a thousand marks a year," said Gretchen. "He saw Frau Marquardt carrying it home!"

"He told Herr Pickelhaube that his wife wore silk stockings!" put in Trudchen, with a blushing giggle.

"Did he say how he found that out?" asked Curt.

"Saw them hanging on the clothes-line, I suppose," explained Gretchen. "She only has one pair, and she washes them after every party."

"A long-nosed, insolent ass!" declared Frau Meyer, meaning the tax-collector, not Frau Pickelhaube.

"Na, na!" replied Curt, "we must support the Government; it takes good care of us."

"Of us?" retorted Frau Meyer. "Most of it goes to feed the Princes at Berlin, and two or three more are born every year, and they cost us forty thousand marks each!"

"For shame!" said Curt. "You're a proper old Social Democrat; and so is Father, for that matter, although, of course, it wouldn't do for a Government official to say so. Think of what Prussia owes to the Hohenzollerns! They are the source of all our national and imperial greatness!"

"I don't see that we're much better off for it! And you've no reason to snort about the Social Democrats. They do a lot of good. Your father's pension will be twice as large now as it would have been but for them."

"Yes," retorted Curt, "the insolent plebs are always shouting for bread and the circus, and they trust the bloody reds to get it for them!"

"And what do you call yourself then, young man?" asked Herr Meyer.

"I'm a patriot!"

"And a pleb, too, in spite of all your high-nosed university whims. If you really came from the aristocracy, now, like those Russian students,

most likely you'd be raving about liberty, equality and fraternity, as they do."

"I may be plebian born, Father," answered Curt, "and that's no fault of mine, but at least I have a soul above pensions and *Butterbrod* . . ."

"Seeing your plebian father has always provided plenty of the said *Butterbrod*," interrupted Herr Meyer with some dignity.

"But, anyway," insisted Curt, "if I were a Government official, drawing Government pay, and expecting a Government pension, I shouldn't be a sneaking Social Democrat and vote on the sly for the Kaiser's worst enemies. I'll bet my head you helped to put in old Schreikopfski, who is a Polish Jew, and has no business in a German Reichstag, or anything else German. Didn't you now?"

"I stand for God, the Kaiser, and the *Vaterland*," said Herr Meyer, sententiously. "Every citizen must vote according to his honest opinion, to make which possible wisdom and justice have decreed that the balloting should be secret. Hence it is not only the right, but the duty, of every citizen to be silent as to how he votes. A man can vote Democratic, and still be a good patriot. If the *Vaterland* were attacked, you'd find every Social Democrat in his place. But

in time of peace the hard-pressed working men will use whatever means they can to obtain tolerable conditions of existence from the jackals of the land and the hyenas of the market place."

"Why, Bebel himself couldn't do better!" sneered Curt. "Mother!" he went on, "do you know what this party that Father votes for wants to do? It wants to set up a blessed Democratic anarchy by pulling everything else in the world down. Every man is to do what is right in his own eyes. Religion, marriage, family life, and society are all to be abolished."

"Nonsense!" said Frau Meyer, "those are only your foolish university notions. I often wonder what good you learn at the university. I know your father far too well to believe any such stuff of the Social Democrats!"

This argument was beyond Curt, who turned to the Father again.

"It might be all right if the whole world were Democratic," he argued, "but it isn't. Look at Russia! What if we had to show our teeth again to Russia as we did last year over the Bosnia-Herzogovina affair? Do you think all the Nihilists in Muskovy would keep the Cossacks out of Königsberg?"

"The army's all right," replied Herr Meyer. "The Social Democrats would soon be turned out if they meddled with that. But they might leave a few more of our fine Prussian regiments out here on the Russian border, instead of sending them all down to the Rhine. You know Pietrowski, the engine-driver, who brings tea over the border at Eidtkunnen in his double-bottomed water-tank? He says there are whole divisions of Russian troops permanently encamped just a few miles beyond the border. Lubinski was in Warsaw last week. I got a taxi for him when he came back yesterday, and I heard him tell another gentleman that the Warsaw garrison is three times as strong as it's given out to be. Every quarter the Assessor wrings our necks for more taxes, while they send our good Prussian regiments down to guard Krupps against the Dutch and Belgians!"

"Perhaps it's the French and English, Father," said Curt. "You know we must take Paris and London first, and then Warsaw and Petersburg."

"And while our troops are battering Paris, the Lithuanians will be stabbing our farmers in their beds, and the Cossacks will be dragging your sisters through the streets of Königsberg by the hair!"

"Well," said Curt coolly, "Paris is worth more than Königsberg, and Belgium ten times as much as East Prussia. Something must be sacrificed!"

"Many thanks!" said Gretchen, "you wouldn't mind it at all, I know, if you were well out of it!"

"Who asked for *your* opinion?" said Curt.

"Children, children!" interposed Frau Meyer, "don't quarrel! We'll talk about something else now!"

HOME SCENES.

III.—The Tax-Collector.

"Really, Herr Meyer, you can't expect me to believe that this is your whole income! No one can live as you do on £40 a year!"

"Times are hard, Herr Tax-collector," said Herr Meyer, "and we poor people have to learn how to economise."

"But your daughters are both sewing most of the time, and umbrella-making is not at all badly paid. They surely earn more than a hundred marks a year between them?"

"May be; but how much do I see of it? They always pay a visit to the café when they

have drawn their money, and then they go to the theatre, or to a concert, and what with their clothes, and their food, I assure you they cost me more than they earn."

"But then you get £30 a year salary paid directly in cash, and the tips must amount to much more than that."

"I wish you would try it for yourself, Herr Tax-collector! We don't get what we used to. Now it's a *Groschen* instead of a *Mark*. Even the Nobility are getting stingy now that the income-tax has been raised again. The work is very hard, and we have to drink a lot of beer to keep up, so what one brings home doesn't amount to much."

"Come now, Herr Meyer," protested the Tax-collector, "be reasonable! I met your wife and daughters in the *Tiergarten* last Sunday, and they were all perfectly dressed. And your son is at the university—member of the student-corps, and all that sort of thing—I know from experience what that costs."

"Heaven knows how he manages it!" said Herr Meyer. "I pay only his bare fees, and he has to live here at home on bread and lard and black coffee, with sometimes a little potato and herring."

"It was certainly not the odour of herring that I noticed in your corridor," replied the Tax-collector with a smile. "I get a salary several times as large as what you have put down here, and *I* can't afford roast pig at one-and-six a pound."

"I swear to you, Herr Tax-collector," explained Herr Meyer, sorely vexed, but still trying to keep his temper, "the pork is a present from the people for whom my wife used to work. They send her a trifle sometimes."

"Well, there seems to be no way of getting round you by reasonable argument. If you ever get to Hell, Herr Meyer, as I fear you must have good reason to anticipate, you will doubtless be able to cozen the Devil into letting you out again. But I may as well tell you that the Government is getting tired of this shameful evasion on the part of you railway porters. It's notorious that you all have plenty of money, and those who don't spend it on drink save up fortunes and become rentiers in their old age. I could swear that your income is at least a hundred pounds a year, and probably nearer two hundred; and yet you have the face to put yourself down at just under £40, and thus escape income-tax altogether!"

"*Aber zum Donnerwetter, Herr Steuereinnehmer!*" broke loose Herr Meyer at last, "what do you expect of us? You drive us nearly mad! Here I have to pay church-tax and school-tax, and city-tax, and province-tax and imperial-tax, to say nothing of indirect taxes on everything we wear and eat and drink, even down to railway tickets, and yet you want us to pay income-tax over and above it all! But before you can compel us, you've got to prove our income! When you succeed in doing that, we'll pay. Not before!"

"If you looked like a poor man, I might be moved by your fireworks," replied the Tax-collector in a quieter voice, "but there are too many appearances to the contrary. You may be sure means will be found to compel you to do your duty!"

And with that he took his departure, completely baffled for the time being. Herr Meyer went angrily into the kitchen, muttering to himself.

"We'll throw it all into the Pregel before we'll give them a red *Pfennig!*" he declared to his wife. "Let them go to the Jews if they want more money!"

IV.—SCHMACK-OSTER.

EASTER Sunday. It was still dark, but Frau Meyer was already busy in the little kitchen. She did all the housework—leaving the girls free to amuse themselves when they had finished their sewing—and also waited on the gentleman who commonly occupied the front room. She was always up at four, and seldom in bed before eleven at night, but although she lived chiefly on bread crusts soaked in strong coffee, she could not keep her weight under twelve stone. She did not appear to work rapidly, but an untidy room straightened itself out as if by magic when she entered it, and without any apparent effort, or flurry, or bustle on her part. The housework always went without a hitch. The roasts and soups and puddings were always perfect, from the Prussian point of view. Her laundry was always snowy and spotless, looking as if the things were newly bought, and as the dirty housework was always done in the middle of the night, no one ever found her house or herself in a disorderly state. Of course, there were no open grates to clean, and the kitchen range was a perfectly air-tight, dustless mechanism burning pressed brickets of coal-dust;

and as the flat was on the third floor, most of the outside dirt was left on the stairs. Nevertheless her achievement was remarkable, and she had kept it up unbroken for over twenty years, for the Meyers never took a holiday lasting more than one day, and such holidays meant double work for the mother, rather than any relaxation.

On this Easter morning, just as the sun rose, Curt stole into the kitchen, looking for a stray bottle of soda-water. His head was far from clear, but he dared not stay in bed any longer.

"Gretchen! Trudchen!" called Frau Meyer, "you'd better get up or you'll get smack-eastered."

"Leave them alone!" whispered Curt; "it's no fun if someone doesn't get smacked on Easter!"

"You might have stayed abed yourself," replied his mother; "a sound smacking might do you good."

"I had my share last year."

"And you richly deserved it! I never laughed so much in my life!" And she began to chuckle at the recollection.

"The old witch nearly choked me," said Curt. "I was blue in the face for an hour afterwards."

"And blue in several other places for a week afterwards," said Frau Meyer, still laughing.

"How many eggs shall I get out?" asked Curt. "Last year you boiled sixty, and there were only three left by evening. But for heaven's sake don't hide any more in the parlour stove!"

"I never could understand that," said Frau Meyer. "I never heard of a hard-boiled egg's exploding three months afterwards. It took a week to get the stench out of the house."

Curt had never explained how he had substituted a fresh egg for the boiled one he had found.

Gretchen and Trudchen were both full-grown girls, but they always insisted on having their Easter-morning egg-hunt. Frau Meyer boiled the eggs, some in water, some in coffee, and some in cochineal. Curt decorated the uncoloured ones with designs that never failed to produce either a laugh or a blush when his sisters found the eggs.

The girls slept on, although their mother called them repeatedly. They had worked until late the evening before, and, while vaguely conscious of the peril hanging over them, they could not overcome their drowsiness. So they did not hear the knock at the door, nor the "Whisper, and then a silence" which followed it. Suddenly

the bedclothes were flung clean off the bed with a single jerk.

"Schmack-Oster, Grün-Oster,"

sang old Frau Woytsch.

"Fünf Eier, Pfund Speck,
*Sonst geh' ich nich' weck!"**

The girls tried to spring up out of bed, but Frau Woytsch, with one hand dextrously twisted into their hair, held them down, while with the other she plied her little bundle of wiry switches over their unprotected limbs until they cried for mercy. Frau Meyer stood laughing in the doorway, and Curt grinned over her shoulder.

Five minutes later the girls were ruefully rubbing the red streaks on their arms with cold cream, while Frau Woytsch sat at the kitchen table drinking coffee and munching cake—these being the usual substitutes in the city for *Eier* and *Speck*.

"You won't catch me again, Frau Woytsch!" declared Gretchen, wrathfully. "You're really too rough! See, the marks show right through

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* "Smack-Easter, Green-Easter,
Five eggs you must pay,
And good bacon, a pound,
Or I don't go away!"

the sleeves of my new blouse! And they smart like fire, too!"

"Then, my dear," replied the old woman, "I hope you'll remember to get up in time next year."

"And *I* hope that you'll be dead and buried by that time!" said Gretchen, but not loud enough to be overheard.

HOME SCENES.

V.—Prussian Discipline.

"Mind you get back by nine o'clock, children!" said Frau Meyer, as her two daughters left the house with Herr Neumann, who was taking them to a concert in the Zoological Gardens, the largest and most aristocratic park in Königsberg. "You know father will be at home this evening!"

"Yes, yes, little mother," they both called out, and were gone.

That evening Herr Meyer came home with not quite enough of the usual mixture of beer and whiskey within to make him good-natured. His wife saw that he was excited, and soon managed to get the story out of him.

"There was a dangerous criminal brought in from Allenstein," he told her. "He fought the guards all the way to the prison, knocked two of

them down in the station itself, in spite of his handcuffs, and nearly got away. But he caught it afterwards. The inspector has just been telling me about it over a glass of beer at Rosensteins. He had cut up rough all the way from Allenstein, where they arrested him, so they just gave him a lesson. When they got him into the prison, they blindfolded him, stripped him, tied him down, and gave him the cane until he fainted. He's as tame as a kitten now, they say."

"But isn't that against the law?" objected Frau Meyer.

"Of course; but what can he do? He doesn't know who struck him, he can't get any witnesses, and the prison doctor will fix him so there will be almost no scars to show by the time he gets out. It's the only way to treat such people. Some emergencies are beyond all laws."

Frau Meyer looked anxiously out of the window.

"Do you hear the thunder?" she asked. "I hope the girls will have sense enough to come home. They have their light dresses on, and no umbrellas. If there was any chance of your finding them, I'd send you to meet them."

"Did you tell them to be in by nine o'clock?"

"Yes. Herr Neumann promised to remember it, too."

In the Zoological Gardens, however, the military band was more than a match for the distant thunder. The sky darkened suddenly, and great drops of rain began to fall; but the door-bell did not ring.

At nine o'clock it was quite dark, and still raining heavily. Frau Meyer knew that the girls had doubtless taken shelter somewhere until the storm should pass over, nevertheless she looked out of the window towards the brilliantly lighted Vorstadt every few minutes.

Herr Meyer got up and walked restlessly about the room. He took off his leather belt and examined it in the gaslight. Then he put it on again, and took down from a peg where it hung on the wall a Chinese whip which his nephew had brought home from the Boxer war. It was a gruesome, blood-stained instrument of torture—a short, stiff handle carrying several leather thongs armed with little balls of lead at the end. He finally hung it up again as unsuitable to his purpose, and took down from a shelf a much-worn dog whip. At last, however, he decided in favour of the belt, which was heavier, and had at one end a metal clasp which had often done great execution on former occasions.

"Dear, good husband!" said Frau Meyer, "you surely don't mean to beat the poor girls to-night? They couldn't come home in the rain. Do be sensible for once. You know you wouldn't do it if you weren't only half drunk!"

"They might have taken the tram," he replied. "I have told them they *must* be in by nine o'clock, unless you are with them."

Shortly after nine o'clock the rain ceased, and at half-past the girls arrived with Herr Neumann, who apologised volubly to Frau Meyer for bringing them in late.

"We went into a café when we saw we couldn't get home before the storm," he explained. "The trams were all full up, and I couldn't even get a taxi, though I did my very best. You'll find them quite undamaged, I'm sure."

Frau Meyer turned him off as soon as possible because of the other storm that was brewing.

The girls went into the kitchen, hand in hand, and fell down on their knees before their father, regardless for once of their white dresses.

"Dear, good *Papachen!*" said Gretchen, "we just couldn't come home in the rain and spoil our new dresses. We really came as soon as we could!"

"Take off your corsets!" commanded Herr Meyer. "I told you to be home by nine o'clock."

Herr Meyer, although half-drunk, was in no passion. His cool, calculating, Teutonic cruelty did not cause him to forget that it would be bad policy to beat pretty, marriageable girls about the head and shoulders, and even the heavy belt would hardly "go through" the stiff corsets.

"Oh, not with the belt; not with the belt, dear, good *Papachen!*" pleaded Gretchen, "it hurts so! Oh, do take the whip!" She ran and fetched the dog whip and held it out to him. "Oh, please take the whip! We'll take off our camisoles and petticoats too, and stand quite still if you'll only use the whip!"

He took it from her hand, and laid it on the shelf again.

"No more noise, now," he ordered, "and be quick!"

Just then the door-bell rang sharply.

"*Zum Donnerwetter!*" exclaimed Herr Meyer, as he went to answer the call.

"Good evening, Herr Meyer!" said Herr Neumann, who had been listening outside, "I do hope you won't blame your daughters for being a few minutes late. It was really my fault. I wouldn't allow them to go home in the rain."

"Go to the Devil!" said Herr Meyer, as he slammed the door in the young man's face.

Meanwhile Gretchen was hastily preparing herself for the ordeal. Frau Meyer took her dress from her with perfect placidity, and hung it up carefully in the large wardrobe which contained all their finery.

"Undress yourself quick, Trudchen!" said Gretchen, "and be ready when he comes back. You know he doesn't hit nearly so hard when we don't make any fuss!"

"I'm not going to undress for him at all!" declared the younger girl, sullenly. "He shan't make me, either! Can't you see that he's half drunk?"

Herr Meyer opened the door just in time to hear the last part of her remark and catch a defiant glance from her eyes.

Gretchen submitted quietly to her punishment, kissed her father's hand according to the prescribed formula, promised between her sobs "to be good and not do it any more," and went to bed.

But Trudchen flatly refused to undress. She took up a position near the open window, and stoutly threatened to jump out of it if her father approached her. But Herr Meyer was too quick for her. He caught her by the arm and threw

her across the table. His temper was up now, and an ugly scene followed which no Englishman would care to describe in detail.

When the red spots began to spread on the thin sleeves of the girl's dress, the mother interfered.

"Submit yourself to your father, Trudchen!" she said; "you know it will be best in the end."

"I'll only do it for your sake, *Muttchen!*" sobbed Trudchen; "he couldn't make me do it if he beat me all night! Unfasten my blouse, Mother, and help me get it off."

When Frau Meyer had unfastened the dress, she pushed the girl into the bedroom and turned to her husband.

"You shan't touch her again to-night!" she said, in a low voice. "She's had enough. Her arms and shoulders are blue and bleeding. You ought to be more sensible. She won't be able to show herself in a light dress for a month, and what's worse, you've spoiled her new blouse! It's torn and stained in half a dozen places!"

The next morning before he went to work, Herr Meyer called the girls from their beds and made them a speech: "I hope you'll remember now that you are always to be home by nine o'clock, whatever happens, unless your mother is with you. And I may as well tell you now

that if you ever get into trouble with that rascally Neumann, or anyone else . . ." He turned around, unlocked a small drawer in the wall from which he took a revolver—"If you ever let any young villain make fools of you, I'll shoot you first, your mother next, and myself last! So beware!"

The girls heard and trembled.

As Herr Meyer walked to the station that morning, he read the paper, which told him, among other things, that eighteen per cent. of the children born in the Province of East Prussia that year were illegitimate. He felt that he was completely justified in the disciplinary measures he had taken.

Nevertheless when he came home in the evening he brought for each of the girls an evening cloak such as they had long wished for themselves, with scarves to match. When Trudchen tried hers on, she found a gold piece in the sleeve, wrapped up in a piece of paper and pinned fast. After a moment's reflection she knew it was for a new blouse.

The girls were sure that they had the best of the affair, and were more than content. But it was a long time before they again failed to get home by nine o'clock.

STREET SCENES.

I.—In the Tiergarten.

"The clothes make the man," runs an oft-quoted Prussian proverb, and it illustrates one of the outstanding features of the Prussian character. There is probably no other nation in the world which supports so magnificent an appearance on such slender means. The cities are clean, showy, with wide streets, fine buildings, beautiful parks, and perfectly equipped tram lines. They are usually deeply in debt, often to the fullest extent of their borrowing power, but they present to the visitor a splendid and flawless exterior.

The standard of dress among the common people is equally remarkable. Workmen do not wear the cast-off clothing of the better classes, nor even their own worn-out Sunday suits, but have special and suitable costumes for the work they do. Self-respecting women and girls of the

lower and middle classes would never think of wearing a " dress " while doing their housework. They have washable working jackets and wide aprons, which are worn directly over their petticoats. The clothing worn in the streets is immediately removed when the wearer gets home, thoroughly brushed or sponged, and hung carefully away on proper frames, so that it will settle into perfect shape again in good time for the next occasion. The Prussian man who cares anything for the respect of his fellows and his employer would never think of putting his hands into the pockets of his good clothes, or of carrying anything in them larger than a carefully folded handkerchief.

Probably no city of its size in the world can put up such an array of perfect dandies and well-dressed women (according to their standards) as Königsberg. And the place to see them is the *Tiergarten* on a fine Sunday afternoon. That is the grand parade ground. A small entrance fee is charged to keep out the few undesirables, but a season ticket for the whole summer can be had for three shillings, and most people provide themselves with these. One can walk for miles through the beautiful promenades of this splendid park, and find everywhere hundreds and thousands

of well-dressed people—spruce clerks and salesmen from the offices and shops of the city, each with his particular Gretchen or Trudchen tucked under his arm; dandy officers from the garrison always surrounded by fluttering groups of delicate-winged butterflies; prosperous shop-owners and rentiers, with their substantial wives in black silk, and a little column of well-washed children marching in orderly fashion on before; while other thousands sit in little groups at the countless tables under the trees, sipping beer and coffee, and sampling sandwiches with infinite precaution that neither drop nor crumb shall by any chance defile their immaculate garments. Sunday in Prussia is a wonderful day, and there is nothing just like it anywhere else.

Mothers all the world over are usually anxious to get rid of their daughters, and this almost universal trait is very strongly developed in the Prussian mother. It is a deep disgrace to daughter and mother as well if no suitable "Partie" for the former can be made, so the competition in the matrimonial market is intense. The Sunday afternoon parade in the *Tiergarten* is very useful for advertising matrimonial wares, and Frau Meyer never failed, if the day was fine, to exhibit her daughters in their "grandes toilettes."

Frau Meyer always accompanied them, for a young girl is never safe from undesirable attentions or even actual insult in the streets of Königsberg, particularly if she is dressed up to attract attention. Frau Meyer herself was clad in expensive but inconspicuous grey alpaca, while the girls were perfect twin studies in white. White dresses, white Leghorn hats, broad rimmed and white feathered, and both set at exactly the same angle, white kid gloves, white shoes and stockings. and white silk parasols. There was neither spot nor wrinkle nor flaw in the whole outfit. And as the girls themselves were both healthy, fresh, and pretty, many eyes turned to glance at them a second time as they slowly marched along the shady boulevard. Frau Meyer's heart swelled with pride, and whenever an officer or other important looking man forgot his own partner for an instant to glance towards the two dream pictures in white, that looked as if they had just stepped out of the model show-window at Wertheims, the mother's grim features would light up a moment with a smile of deep satisfaction.

No one spoke to them, however, save actual acquaintances, for this was not the occasion for making advances. Introductions could be had

at parties or balls, and although Prussian girls are allowed a certain liberty in conducting their own matrimonial affairs, yet the negotiations must be carried on with the parents' full consent, or the almost universally required marriage dower may be withheld.

The Meyer trio had walked for perhaps half an hour when Trudchen suddenly turned round to her mother.

"Look there!" she exclaimed. "Isn't that Curt? I do believe he's sitting with that Junker girl! Yes, he's seen us, and is coming to meet us."

Frau Meyer frowned. Felicitas Junker was a very handsome young blonde, whose only fortune was her face. She was cashier in a large city drapery shop, and evidently spent all her money on her clothes. But her mother was a charwoman, and would soon require support unless she were fortunate enough to die. The girl had no guardian aside from her widowed mother, and led a free life, keeping about her as many young students and other men with money to spare as she could attract by means of her handsome face, her fine clothes, and her easy manners. When Curt had finished the medical course he would be able to get a wife with at least two or

three thousand pounds, and he would need the money, too, if he set up in private practice, so his parents were vigilant to prevent him from forming any connection that might hinder his prospects.

"Is that the Junker girl you were sitting with?" asked Frau Meyer, as soon as Curt had joined them.

"Yes; what of it?"

"You know if I tell your father about it there'll not be another red *Pfennig* for university fees."

"I don't much care if there isn't!" retorted Curt hotly. "You'll not keep me tied to your apron strings much longer by that threat. All the other fellows amuse themselves. It's hard enough to get along with a shilling a week pocket money, when all the other chaps have pounds, and then to be told that one mustn't look at a pretty girl is too much."

"Nobody objects to your looking," replied his mother drily; "but I know Felicitas Junker, and Felicitas Junker's mother, and I know she's out for a 'grande partie.' She may be a bit fast, but she's got a clear head on her. I tell you you must keep out of her way. She's ten times a match for you."

"Rubbish!" ejaculated Curt. "She runs

with half the members of my corps. It was only by good luck that I got her this afternoon. The chap who had bargained for her to-day got his nose slit up last night and couldn't come. So I'm only a stop-gap."

"But you've been a stop-gap rather too frequently of late. Girls like Fay Junker cost money when they're out for fun, and as you haven't any money, I know you must be giving her something else, or she wouldn't go with you. If she once gets hold of your little finger she'll cling like grim death, and you won't be able to shake her off."

"Leave her to me," said Curt. "She knows her place, and that no university student would ever think for a moment of entangling himself with a charwoman's daughter."

"I shall tell her mother to-morrow that if you're seen with the girl again you'll leave the university the next day and go over to the station to earn your own living," said Frau Meyer decisively.

"I'd like to see you make me!" retorted Curt.

"Well, you could try any other way you pleased," said his mother; "but you'd soon find how much Felicitas Junker thought of you then!"

Curt turned angrily away and walked off without another word.

"Give my dearest love to Fay!" called Trudchen after him.

"Hold your snout!" he retorted fiercely, and several of the bystanders laughed.

STREET SCENES.

II.—FIRE!

THE flat in which the Meyers lived had a large attic at the top which was used by all the families living in the house for storage purposes and drying clothes in wet weather. There was also a cellar at the bottom of the house, divided up into compartments, in which each family could keep its coals, potatoes, etc. Contrary to the English custom, there was a single, open flue for all the kitchen ranges, and it extended into the cellar below where there was a "soot box." This convenience for the sweeps happened to be in Frau Meyer's corner of the cellar.

There was a pile of old rags stored near the "soot box," and either some sparks got among them through the supposedly fire-proof door, or they began to smoulder from spontaneous combustion. At the first thin wisp of smoke

that issued from the cellar window into the street, some officious urchin smashed in the nearest alarm box, and before the actual occupants of the house knew what was happening the whole fire-fighting apparatus was down upon them.

First came a cyclist, riding like "holy Moses on a broomstick," and ringing a large bell to clear the way. Then came the *Brand-direktor* in a light trap drawn by a splendid trotter and driven by one of the firemen. The procession proper followed, consisting of the hose-wagon, the ladder-wagon, the chemical extinguisher, and finally the fire-engine itself, each drawn by anywhere from four to eight enormous horses, plunging along with an appalling jangle of bells and din of ponderous hoofs and metallic apparatus. Each horse carried a bell hardly smaller in size than those fitted to American locomotives of the older type. The passage of a fire brigade was one of the sights of the town. At the warning of the cyclist's bell, all traffic hurried into the nearest side streets, leaving a clear path for the oncoming uproar. Partly, perhaps, because of the splendour of the spectacle, the Königsbergers stuck to their horses for the fire brigades in preference to motor wagons until very recently.

Herr Meyer was sleeping on the sofa when Gretchen, happening to go into the front room, suddenly called out:

"Oh, mother, there's a fire somewhere! The street is full of people, and they're all running this way."

She opened the window and called out, "Where is it?"

"In your cellar!" came the startling reply.

Gretchen rushed into the kitchen with the news.

"*Mann!*" called Frau Meyer, "come quick! They say our cellar's on fire!"

"Have you got your keys?" asked her husband, springing up and following her downstairs. She ran back to fetch them.

They found the cellar full of smoke, and the *Brand-direktor* trying to force open the door into the Meyer's compartment. Frau Meyer unlocked it with trembling fingers, and the two men disappeared into the stifling smoke.

"Water!" roared Herr Meyer, and his wife hurried off upstairs again as fast as she could carry her twelve stone. Herr Meyer came out of the cellar just in time to meet her coming down again with a pint jug half full. He dashed the jug out of her hand with an oath, and it

crashed to fragments on the cement floor. The bystanders laughed.

By this time a dozen firemen were on the spot with hand extinguishers, and the danger was over. They spent the rest of the day examining the house from top to bottom, looking into all the stoves and ranges, to the infinite vexation and inconvenience of the tenants, and finally left things in as fireproof condition as possible.

That night Trudchen read the story of the episode aloud from the evening paper, and got tremendous satisfaction out of it, regretting only that her own name was not mentioned.

STREET SCENES.

III.—At the Post Office.

"I THINK I must send Amalia a parcel," announced Frau Meyer one morning after reading the single letter brought by the postman. "She says that Heinrich has lost his place, and although she doesn't beg, I know they must be hard up."

"Amalia" was her married sister living in Vienna, and her husband was a hotel waiter.

They gathered together the things that were to be included in the parcel; a cake, a piece of

liver sausage, a smoked goose-breast, a pound of sweets for the children, a couple of pounds of butter, a pot of jam, and a score of hard-boiled eggs. The whole was carefully packed in a large cardboard box, wrapped in several layers of paper, tied with about twenty yards of string, and then taken to the shop over the way to be weighed. It was nearly a pound too heavy.

So it all had to be done over again, and nearly two hours elapsed before Trudchen was sent with it to the post office.

Now Trudchen was a pretty, pink-cheeked *Backfisch*, who started and blushed whenever spoken to by a stranger, giggled with or without provocation, and wept almost as easily. She was just the type that a normal Prussian official loves to bully, brow-beat, and tease. She had a hard time of it that morning.

The clerk at the post office first gave her a complicated form to fill out, and she spoilt two or three before coming to the real difficulties of the task.

Seeing how helpless she was, the young man at last snatched the form out of her hand, and began to fill it out himself.

"Now tell me what's in this parcel," he said, after completing the preliminaries. "You

know it's got to go through the Austrian customs, and you must state exactly what's in it, and how much of each, and what it's worth."

Trudchen began bravely enough, but stuck at the jam. Her mother had made it, and she didn't know how much there was nor how much it cost.

"Let's have a look at it!" said the clerk, and he proceeded to snip up the string and tear off the wrappings that had cost so much time and patience. In three minutes he had the whole show spread out on the counter.

"Well," he observed, scornfully, surveying the display with a critical grimace, "so this is the kind of a parcel you're sending to Vienna! How do you suppose I'm to tell how much of each particular mess there is? What do you mean, anyway, by bringing a parcel here and not knowing yourself what's in it? Now let me give you a bit of advice. If it's really necessary to send this lot to Vienna, take it home and get each separate article properly weighed, and write down on a sheet of paper what it is and how much it weighs, and how much it is worth. Scrape the jam out of the jar—into another dish I mean, not on to the floor—and weigh first the dish, and then put in the jam and weigh

the whole thing. The difference will represent the actual weight of the jam. Then pack it up again and bring it here, and I'll see if we can get it off. Do you understand ?"

Trudchen was ready to cry, and could not trust herself to reply. The gallant young man turned away and left her to gather up the articles and pack them as best she could in the torn remnants of paper and pieces of string that remained over from the wreck of the parcel.

STREET SCENES.

IV.—MARKETING.

FRAU MEYER, with her wide, black cape thrown over her working jacket, and her basket on her arm, went to the market for the day's provisions. It was not yet six o'clock, but already the sun shone brightly on the wide square, that was already thronged with vendors and purchasers.

First she came to the farmers' wives who sold butter, cheese and eggs. The pound rolls of butter, wrapped first in cheese-cloth, and then in cabbage leaves, to keep them fresh and cool, filled enormous wicker-work baskets, and there were other baskets, partly filled with eggs. The

women spoke mostly *Plattdeutsch* of a most piquant local variety, and called to every passer-by, often by name, recommending their wares. Butter sold at prices comparable to those in England, but eggs went at the rate of tenpence or a shilling for twenty.

Then came the fruit and vegetable booths. Here constant sprays of water played over everything of a perishable nature, keeping the radishes and greens as fresh as when they came from the garden.

But the fish market was the wonder of the place. No self-respecting Königsberger-Frau would think of buying dead fish unless they were salted or pickled, hence the numerous tanks, some of glass, others of metal, out of which the fish were taken directly, flopping and squirming, when they were sold. There could be no doubt about their freshness.

Some of the women who officiated in the market-place were respectable farmers' wives, but there was a large class of professionals living in the city whose reputation was of the lowest kind. To "swear like a Königsberg fish-wife" is a proverb throughout East Prussia. These women often got into violent squabbles among themselves, and it was no uncommon thing for one of them

to turn another over her knee, lift up her skirts, and give her a sound smacking in full view of all the amused bystanders and city clerks looking out of the second-floor windows further back.

In the meat market everything was as immaculate as elsewhere. Great chunks of ice lying about everywhere kept the atmosphere cool. All the tables were of marble. Every piece of meat was stamped all over showing that it had been examined by Government bacteriologists and found free from disease microbes of every kind. No animals may be killed save in the Government slaughter-houses, and no meat sold which does not bear the Government stamp. Diseased meat is not wasted, but steamed at high pressure for some hours to destroy all germs, and then sold at a low price direct from the slaughter-house.

Frau Meyer bought a fine, three-pound eel for about two-and-six, and had the "fish-wife" stick it into her basket. She could not bear to touch the animal herself, but when she got home she would turn it out into a large basin, get a fork into it, and cut it up, after which it was easily manageable. This particular eel, however, proved more than a match for her. Feeling that

her basket was vibrating in an unusual way, she looked down and saw that it was sliding out. She tipped the basket sideways and shook it frantically to get the eel back into it again, but the eel gave another vigorous wriggle, and fell with a flop upon the ground. Off it went, towards the river, not very fast, of course, but with unmistakable determination, while Frau Meyer followed after, wringing her hands, stooping now and then over it, but unable to bring herself to touch it. At last she had to give sixpence to a small boy for picking it up and putting it in her basket. She vowed she would never buy an eel again.

At the market place she heard that the Lithuanian potato merchants were already in the river, so in the afternoon she went down to the Pregel to buy her supply of potatoes for the winter. People who claim to know say that the finest potatoes in the world are grown in Lithuania and East Prussia. Certainly the potatoes they offer in the Königsberg market are of a very superior quality.

The potato barges were moored to the wharfs along all the canals that intersect the city. Each farmer has his own boat, and each boat is fitted up with a little cabin and a stove within for

boiling potatoes. Such a barge contained anywhere from twenty to a hundred tons. From a distance the piles of potatoes looked almost like heaps of wave-washed pebbles on the sea-shore. Grown in the rich but sandy soil of East Prussia, they were almost as clean and smooth and white as eggs. They were not large, but of uniform size, and not a cut or bruised one to be found among them.

On the stove in the little cabin bubbled a large iron pot full of them, and by the side of the stove stood a keg of salt herrings. Prospective customers who seemed to be genuine purchasers, or who, perhaps, were personally acquainted with the merchant-farmers, received a boiled potato (in its skin), and a piece of herring to eat with it, by way of a sample. The hot potato, broken open, turned out as white and mealy as a ball of cotton.

Frau Meyer bought five hundredweight, watched the weighing with a jealous eye, and saw the potatoes loaded upon one of the numerous small handcarts along the shore, waiting for just such jobs. She paid two shillings a hundredweight, and grumbled at the price. She could remember when the price had been a shilling.

V.—The Kaiser's Visit.

KAISER-MANÖVER! Königsberg was full of soldiers, and almost every private house of any respectability had at least a lieutenant, if not some higher officer, quartered upon it. The actual field of operations was some miles south of the East-Prussian metropolis, so the Kaiser had not yet visited the city itself, but it was rumoured that he would pass through the suburbs on his way to the country house of Von der Goltz near Cranz.

Gretchen and Trudchen had come home on the previous day in a sad condition. Curt had taken them to Preussisch Eylau to see the cavalry manœuvres. One section of the enormous crowd, led by a small but well-organised and determined band of students from the university, had broken through the police cordon and let the multitude stream out into the great plain. But before they could get seriously into the way, the local fire brigade appeared and quelled them completely with a solid two-inch stream of icy water, which knocked them down by the dozen like nine-pins. Curt Meyer, who was among the students, had dragged his

sisters into the midst of this frightful melée, and although they had not been seriously injured, their new spring costumes were beyond repair. Curt was too big to be thrashed, so the girls had their ears soundly boxed instead, and then went to bed for a week with severe colds. It was reported that the Crown Prince himself had given the order, and the Social Democratic papers were black with fury. Even Herr Meyer sulked for some hours, and nearly decided not to take part in the veterans' parade that was to be held that day in honour of the Kaiser's expected visit.

The city authorities had decided to plant lime trees along the Chaussee that led up to the *Brandenburgertor* and thus create a local *Unter den Linden*. It was thought that the Kaiser would be willing to provide an effective and gratuitous advertisement of the new suburb by setting out the first tree. His secretary had accepted the invitation in his master's name, and elaborate preparations for the ceremony were made.

Hours before the appointed time the crowd began to assemble. The local veterans of 1866 and 1870-71 were given the task of guarding the thoroughfare. Some two thousand of these aged

heroes, bent, white-haired, and often crippled, had come together in honour of the great War-lord, to see him, perhaps, for the last time in their lives. Many of those from the surrounding villages were clothed in rags, for their pensions amounted to only a few shillings a month, and they shunned the aid and tyrannous supervision of the city authorities. Some wore their iron crosses, or any lesser decorations they might possess. Others had found a military cloak or cap with which to grace the day. All stood as straight as their bent forms would permit, and the pushing, surging crowds were kept back by pity and respect for the aged defenders of the "Fatherland" drawn up in those two long, thin, wavering lines.

Hour after hour they waited. The weather had turned suddenly cold, and gusty showers of rain, mixed with snow, swept along the open highway. The city authorities, standing in a little group around the silver-handled spade which His Imperial Majesty was to immortalise by a magic touch, turned up the collars of their fur-lined overcoats and shivered in the wind. Very few of the old soldiers had great-coats of any description, but they remained at their posts of duty to a man. Everyone prayed that the Kaiser might come soon.

Four hours he kept them waiting. Towards evening the wind turned to the east and began to clear away the clouds, but although the sun came out for a moment now and then, the raindrops clinging to the trees began to crystallise, and everyone felt the preliminary twinges that announce a "Russian" frost.

At last the Imperial automobile, followed by half a dozen others, sprang into view at the further end of the Chaussee, and the half-frozen veterans raised a feeble cheer, echoed even more feebly by the now fast thinning crowd. But either the Secretary had made a mistake, or the Emperor was afraid of taking cold in the biting wind, for the splendid motor cavalcade swept with a blinding splatter of mud through the throng, roared past the group of bare-headed, bowing functionaries standing near the *Tor*, and was gone before anyone could realise what had happened. Hardly a dozen people in the crowd caught even a glimpse of the royal countenance, and those who did averred that he never even troubled to look out through the glass door of his closed coupé.

The crowd broke up with bitter complaints. The old soldiers hobbled back to their homes, not a few of them to beds from which they never

rose again. Herr Meyer, who at the last moment had decided to do his duty after all, reached home in a savage temper, jerked off the dripping great-coat his wife had brought him early in the afternoon, threw his empty rum bottle into the coal-hod with a loud crash, and swore by a thousand pots of lightning and holy thunder-weather that he would never cross the road to see the Kaiser again.

"Mother," he said, "do you remember when Kaiser Fritz was here in the year 1888? How he made the horses walk, and stood in the carriage and bowed and laughed all the time? And when he came to the veterans of 1870, he got out and talked with them, and shook hands with some, and gave others gold pieces. And two or three he remembered by name, and asked them about their old wounds, and chatted with them like an old chum. Oh, he was the Kaiser for Germany, and we'll never have another like him! If he had only lived, Germany would have been another country, and there'd have been no need for Social Democrats. But this Kaiser is as proud as Satan, and spurns us common people under his foot. And it's all owing to his English mother. He has the cold, proud English blood in his veins. That was the only mistake 'Our Fritz' ever

made, to marry an English princess, and he was sorry, too, before he died."

"My father was a holy man," said Frau Meyer; "he read the Bible every day and prayed that he might understand the prophecies. He foretold the war of 1870 from the blood-red sunsets we had all the summer before. He said it was a sign, and it came true. And when our brave soldiers were winning their greatest victories he said that the war would ruin Germany, for we should be proud and hard and cold because of our victory. And then he said there was a prophecy that said that Germany should be humbled to the dust, and become small enough to hide herself under a fig-tree. I don't know where the prophecy was, but he said it was in the Bible. And now this proud Kaiser will be the death of us all, I know. And it has all come from that traitor-princess and her English doctor, McKenzie, who murdered 'Our Fritz!'"

The following day Herr Meyer came home in a better mood and told how the Crown Prince had saved the honour of the Hohenzollerns. First he went to the Castle, and there had dinner with the city magnates, partaking largely of and praising highly the celebrated *Königsberger-klops* (a kind of boiled meat-balls with sour sauce).

He made the fullest apology for his father's remissness on the previous day, and then walked through the streets all the way to the station, where the Imperial train stood in waiting to convey him to Berlin. The railway officials had taken the most elaborate measures to have everything ready, but just as the Crown Prince approached the train, two smutty mechanics, who had missed the signal warning all ordinary persons to get out of the way, crawled up from between two carriages and found themselves face to face with the whole dazzling throng of notabilities who formed the escort of the Imperial scion. The two men stood petrified for the moment at the appalling results which were sure to follow such an unheard-of breach of court etiquette. But before the horrified station-master could interfere, the Crown Prince himself stepped up to them and entered into conversation. He asked them what they had been doing, what wages they were getting, how many children they had, and frankly admitted that he could not understand how a man could bring up a family of seven children on a pound a week. He was highly amused at their frightened, monosyllabic replies to his queries, tried to imitate their dialect, laughed at his own ludicrous failure, and finally,

after insisting on shaking each of the sooty paws, gave them a few gold pieces, and told them to remember him to their wives and children. Everyone agreed that the Crown Prince had saved the whole situation by this simple act.

STREET SCENES.

VI.—Der Naturmensch.

Germany, hardly less than England, is the home of fads and freaks—an illustration of the celebrated pun that "it takes a few cranks to turn the world." To one who looks into the by-ways and hedges, it is a land of water-cures and vegetarians, of obscure religious sects, and extraordinary local superstitions. There is no lack of ardent reformers who are ready, yea, anxious, to suffer persecution for the particular truth that has filled their minds, to the exclusion of all others.

Trudchen ran into the kitchen one afternoon in a state of breathless excitement.

"Oh, mother, come quick! There's a Nature-man in the *Vorstadt* with his wife and child. The street is full of people. I got just a glimpse of them, and then ran to tell you. Come quick, or he'll be gone!"

Frau Meyer threw her all-concealing black cape over her shoulders and hurried downstairs. They went to a little shop in the *Vorstadt* which they often patronised, and begged a place at the upstairs window to watch the procession pass by.

The "Nature-man" and his family had been elbowed from the pavement into the street by the crowd, but he easily opened a way through the throng by swinging his short, thick cudgel slowly back and forth before him. His wife followed, dragging a frightened little girl by the hand. The man wore only a pair of dark, canvas trousers reaching from the waist to the knee. He had red hair, uncut but not unkempt; a curly, well-combed beard of the same colour; and dark, fine eyes. The skin of his muscular, well-shaped body was tanned to a deep brown, but looked, nevertheless, quite clean. A long knife stuck in his belt, to which a wallet of woven river-grass was also attached. He walked slowly and leisurely, swinging his cudgel now and then, at which the crowd fell back as if from a magic wand. His quick, bright glances seemed to observe everything, and the scornful smile on his face revealed his opinion of what he saw.

The wife wore a blanket flung loosely over her shoulders, and carried another that her husband

had evidently thrown off before entering the city. Her yellow hair was also unbraided, but bound loosely at the back by a band of plaited grass. She also was barefooted, but her blanket, falling open now and then, revealed a single undergarment of unbleached linen, cut in the shape of a French chemise, and reaching to the knees. The little girl wore a similar garment, and trailed her blanket, which she had found too warm in the afternoon sun, behind her in the dust. The child was almost as brown as her father, but on the mother's white skin the sun had brought forth an abundant crop of brilliant freckles.

The parade through the streets was an advertisement, for the Nature-man was to lecture in the *Stadt-theater* that night; but he financed the enterprise himself, and charged no entrance fee.

Gretchen and Trudchen insisted on going, and it certainly was well worth while. When the lecturer entered from the wing, the whole audience (and the building was packed) rose to its feet.

"Let me see him, let me see him, Mother!" whispered Trudchen, trying to push her mother out of the way.

"Can't you see him?" asked the immovable Frau Meyer; "I can see him well enough."

"Oh, I can see his head," replied Trudchen; "but I want to see *all* of him!"

The occupants of the adjacent seats greeted this innocent remark with a delighted titter, and Trudchen subsided into blushing inconspicuousness. When the excited audience sat down again, and discovered they could all see very much better (for the theatre was scientifically built), the man, clad as in the afternoon, had taken up his position at the centre of the stage, and the woman was sitting on the floor, cross-legged, just in front of the blazing foot-lights, her bare knees showing beyond the hem of her scanty chemise, while the child sat in similar posture and costume beside her. The mother faced the lights and the thousands of curious faces beyond without blinking, and looked quite as innocent and unsophisticated as the child.

Speaking in pure, perfect, Munich German, the man told them the story of his life. He was a university graduate. He had lost his health by fast and high living, and had turned to Nature for healing. He cleared with his own hands a piece of ground on his Bavarian estate, and within a year had inured himself to the natural life, gaining by experience strength and dexterity

sufficient to support himself by the work of his hands. He fed on raw grains, vegetables, and fruits, which he raised himself. He lived out of doors, winter and summer, day and night, and slept out of doors in all weathers, wrapped in a single blanket. He found all weathers delightful. Rain and cold were tonic and refreshing, warmth and sunlight soothing and restful, and his body responded perfectly to the variations of the climate. He had not known a day of illness since he returned to Nature, and although now fifty years old, he felt stronger, healthier, fresher, and more elastic than he had at twenty, and looked forward to another half-century of enjoyable existence.

Soon after establishing himself in the new mode of living, he picked up a poor, deserted waif in the streets of Munich, raised her and trained her according to his ideas, and when she had reached the proper age, married her. She had brought forth the child that they saw before them in the midst of a forest during a severe snowstorm, without any aid and almost without pain, and neither mother nor child had ever known a day of sickness.

He explained to them his plan of life. Fifteen years ago he had begun his pilgrimage through

Germany. He moved once a year, hired a small piece of ground in the new locality, planted it with his own hands, living in the meantime from the produce of the previous year, which he and his wife carried with their own hands from the old place to the new. He found it easy to supply all his needs by means of regular labour two or three hours each day, and the rest of the time was left for observation, study and relaxation. He had travelled thus by easy stages of thirty or forty miles each year from Bavaria to East Prussia, and in each place he had left a little colony of converts to his way of living. He had lectured in all the larger cities along his line of pilgrimage, and the only drafts he made on the income from his small patrimonial estate was to pay the hire of halls and theatres for this purpose. He told them where he had settled down in East Prussia for the year, and invited all who were interested to come and visit him in his home. He announced that this was the last call Germany would receive from him, for he planned to move on into Russia the next year, and spread the knowledge of his gospel there. He was a humanitarian to the extent that he ate no meat, and wore no clothing that involved the death of animals. He offered, however, to arm any three men in

the audience with cudgels similar to his own, and promised to knock them down as fast as they could get up again. He held that the only animal man was justified in killing was man himself, for man was the most savage of animals, and the only animal in that part of the world that was likely to deserve being killed.

The lecturer ended by asking them to accept his personal testimony that more joy and satisfaction and real pleasure was to be had out of life by living it in Nature's way than could be obtained from all the unsatisfying devices of civilisation, and he only begged his hearers to try it.

On the way home, Curt remarked that the world would certainly be more interesting if men and women everywhere went about in their shirts and chemises, but if that was going to cure them of all diseases, he should oppose the change, for it would leave him without an occupation in life.

His attitude was typical of that of the world in general towards reform.

VII.—The Horse-Lottery..

"Come here a minute, my treasure, my darling, my little sweetheart!"

Trudchen Meyer was standing before a shop window behind which lay row after row of blue-green lottery tickets. A little six-year-old boy had just come running around the corner, and to him the above blandishments were addressed.

"Just a moment, my dear, and you shall have this lovely *Marzipansatz* for your trouble," continued Trudchen.

Königsberg marzipan is celebrated throughout Germany.

"Now run into this shop and ask the uncle to give you a ticket for the horse-lottery. Here is a Mark, and when you come back with the ticket you shall have the marzipan, see?"

The child looked at her doubtfully a moment. He had been told never to parley with strangers on the street, or have anything to do with them, but the marzipan was too tempting, so he took the shining new silver Mark and entered the shop. Half a minute later he was running down the street with his reward, while Trudchen carefully

stuck the ticket into the innermost recess of her purse.

"I'm sure to have luck this time," she told her mother when she reached home; "it was really the sweetest little fellow you ever saw, and the coin was quite new. They told me at the bank that it had never been used, but had just come from the mint at Berlin."

"You're as silly as your father, child," said Frau Meyer. "Of course, you may win something sometime, but you'll never win half of what you put into it. If I could have persuaded your father not to play, we should have a few thousand Marks more in the bank now than we have. He's been playing for thirty years, and thinks he's sure to draw a big prize sometime, but he never will. Can't you see that the Government are bound to make a lot more out of it than they put into it?"

Frau Meyer had used this rather obvious argument a hundred times before, but it had proved as unconvincing as obvious arguments usually do. Herr Meyer had always played, and the children played also. They had won two or three small prizes, just enough to fan the hope that sometime they would win a big one.

"But it's such tremendous fun, Mother,"

said Trudchen. "It's worth the money, even if you don't win anything!"

Her mental attitude was that of thousands of others.

The first prize in the Königsberg horse-lottery used to be a splendid state-carriage drawn by four English-bred carriage horses, together with a set of silver-plated harness and other suitable equipment. The second prize was a smaller carriage with two horses, and there were several single horses of different values for further prizes.

On this occasion Curt had also bought a couple of tickets, and after the usual feverish search through the *Extrablatt* containing the winning numbers, and the usual disappointment when they found their numbers were not in the lists, they went over to the horse market in the afternoon to watch the winners dispose of their prizes.

The first lucky gambler to leave the enclosure was a confectioner's apprentice. He came out, looking sheepish enough, leading a great Flemish draught horse, fluttering in ribbons. The crowd in the market-place included scores of dealers and speculators, chiefly Jews, too wise to risk their money in the lottery, knowing that it would be easy to swindle the winners out of their prizes

and sell them again at a profit of a few hundred per cent. or so.

Half a dozen of these clever gentlemen, rattling gold pieces in their pockets, at once fell upon the hapless apprentice. He knew nothing of horses, and had never before seen such a dazzling little heap of twenty-mark pieces as was now placed within his reach. In less than two minutes the deal was completed. The Jew, having bought the horse for about a third of its real value, turned it over to a groom standing near by, and the happy boy went home, only to receive a furious scolding and a sound caning from his angry master, who had planned to treat him as the Jew had done.

Trudchen and Curt stood for a long time watching the winners dispose of their prizes, cheering those who made the purchasers pay up moderately well, and joining the chorus of hisses when Abraham or Melchisedek got the best of the bargain. The nominal values of all the prizes were printed on slips of paper, and it was thought too bad if any winner failed to get half of the assessed value. The larger prizes, which were of an unpractical nature, usually went for a much smaller fraction of their nominal cost.

At last a sudden movement in the crowd,

followed by a wild chorus of hurras, announced the crowning event of the day, and the way opened for the passage of the first prize. It was a splendid white carriage, entirely finished in white and gold, and drawn by four magnificent white horses.

"Who is it? Who is it?" asked everyone; but the winner was surrounded by a crowd of insistent speculators, each trying to edge the others out of the way.

"Lift me up, Curt, so I can see!" said Trudchen. "*Mein Gott!*" she exclaimed a moment later, "as I live, it's Felicitas Junker."

Curt's grasp relaxed so suddenly that Trudchen nearly fell headlong. They could see nothing, but Curt thought he could hear the clear, high voice he knew so well above the Babel of guttural *Plattdeutsch* all around.

"Are you sure?" he asked, as soon as he got his breath.

"As God lives!" replied Trudchen, "and she's having a hard time of it. Of course they'll cheat her out of it. Who wants a white carriage now-a-days?"

"Let's go home," said Curt, weakly. He wanted to think things over. He had for some time fancied himself in love with Felicitas, and he

was really as fond of her as he was capable of being fond of anything, but he had never seriously thought of marrying her. He knew his parents would never consent. Perhaps they would look at things differently if the girl had a few thousand marks.

Then he knew it was caddish of him, after what he had tacitly promised her, not to go to her assistance at such a crisis as this. With his help she might get twice as much for her prize, and that would make all the difference in the world. But there were scores of students in the crowd, and they would tease him mercilessly if he went to the aid of a charwoman's daughter, and perhaps get his name into the papers as the gallant knight who rescued the helpless maid from the clutches of the money-grubbers. They would ask him how much he had made out of it, and a good many still coarser questions. So he went home, and left the girl he pretended to love to fight it out alone.

No other subject was mentioned in the Meyer family that evening.

"I don't see what there is to make such a fuss about," said Frau Meyer, when the matter had been discussed from every possible point of view. "It isn't as if she had won the first prize

in the State-lottery. She won't have got more than two or three thousand marks out of it at best, and I pity the silly fool who thinks such a ridiculous outfit is worth buying. You may be sure she will run through with the money in a few weeks, and then have to go back to work again. It's only such worthless chits that ever have such luck, and it never does them any good, but is a curse in the end."

"You'd put up with the curse for the sake of the money quick enough," said Curt, angrily. He was too much of a moral coward to defend the girl directly, but he struck at the others whenever there was a chance. He was burning with curiosity to know what Felicitas had obtained for it, but the evening paper only gave the name of the winner, and said the prize had been sold for an unknown sum by private treaty.

Meanwhile Felicitas had been having the "time of her life" in more ways than one. She had never heard of the "tide in the affairs of men," but she realised the magnitude of her opportunity, and determined to make the most of it.

She had sometimes tried to make herself believe that the weak-mouthed young medical student might possibly be cozened into marrying

her if it were not for his parents, for she knew she was a very handsome girl; but in her saner moments she was bound to admit that he could never take a penniless bride to the altar. His circumstances compelled him to marry money if he meant to succeed, and he need have no difficulty in doing so when his course was completed.

In the first bewildering moments after the discovery of her success she was unable to think at all, but before she went out to face the crowd in the market-place she had time to look at the slip that was handed her, and she saw that her prize was listed at fifty thousand marks (£2,500). She knew that fifty thousand marks would be a moderate yet respectable fortune for a doctor's wife, and for fifty thousand marks she determined to fight. So when the Hebrew phalanx charged down upon her, flourishing handfuls of blue and green notes and bags of gold coin in her face, she met them with cool disdain.

"See here, my dear young lady!" cried the first assailant, pouring out a little bag of gold pieces into one hand, "I will give you all these for your prize!"

"How much?" she asked, coolly.

"A thousand marks!" he answered. "Just think! Fifty beautiful twenty-mark gold pieces!

Enough to buy the gracious Fraülein a complete set of furniture for a whole house ! "

The girl's heart sank within her as she heard the sum offered. She knew that the Jews always tried to cheat, but it was a very long stretch from one thousand to fifty. Nevertheless she was determined to fight. She laughed him to scorn, and turned to the others.

The bidding began, and rose quickly through the lower thousands ; but as it approached five thousand the bidders began to get angry and restless.

" What does the gracious Fraülein expect ? " one of them asked peevishly. " Does she think the Kaiser will buy her carriage ? "

Then some of them tried to persuade her to take a ride in it around the town, a kind of triumphal procession, and let all her friends see her. In that way they gained time, for they knew she would have to dispose of it before night-fall, and its value would be considerably decreased by such a procedure. In former years sometimes a prize winner had been foolish enough to follow this suggestion, but for Felicitas too much was at stake.

" No, no ! " she said, " it will take all the time we have to bring you to reason. I don't have to sell at all if I don't want to ! "

"Has the gracious Fraülein a place to keep such a carriage and four horses, and hay and oats and grooms for the horses?" they asked.

"Of course, I would rather sell," admitted the girl, "but only for a reasonable price. I can get a place, and a groom, if necessary. See, I am not so poor or so silly as you seem to think!"

She took her purse from her pocket and showed them half a dozen gold pieces. She had just drawn her month's salary.

The clique of financiers drew back a little at this and entered into consultation with each other. Felicitas knew, and everyone else knew, that the apparent intense competition was merely a ruse to deceive the uninitiated. There were in the crowd, however, two or three freelance speculators, who now began to bid genuinely against each other, and they between them brought the price up to ten thousand marks before the Jews returned to the charge.

At last it occurred to someone to ask this refractory young lady what her price was.

"There are four thoroughbred English carriage horses," answered Felicitas, consulting the description. "They are listed at ten thousand marks each; and the carriage is also ten thousand

marks. That makes fifty thousand marks. That is my price!"

The stare of astonishment which followed this announcement was broken by a roar of laughter.

"The gracious one really understands business!" they exclaimed. "Fifty thousand marks! That is her price! Really, not a bad idea at all, is it?"

Then they began to labour with her again. Some tried to persuade the others to leave her alone for a time till she came to her senses, but there were too many blacklegs in the crowd for an effective boycott. The others argued with her. They told her she had no idea of the value of such a thing; after all, the carriage was really a useless toy; the horses were very fine, but the fancy price put on them was realisable only if they were kept together, and only crowned heads had any use for four snow-white horses for a single carriage. There was nobody in the whole province, they told her, who would care for such an outfit.

She knew all this, but there was nothing to prevent her from fighting till the sun went down; and it was worth while, even if she only got a thousand marks or so more for her trouble. She would never again in her life be able to earn a

thousand marks so easily. They might say what they pleased, and storm and rage, and even insult her, for they did not hesitate at that; but she kept in sight of the mounted policeman at the corner, and stood close to the foremost of the four grooms that held the heads of her restive horses so that she could not be outflanked and surrounded.

The crowd increased as the battle went on. The bidders raised their offers little by little to fifteen thousand marks, and there they stuck again. Felicitas knew very well that fifteen thousands marks would not buy Curt Meyer's hand in marriage, and she would not give in. She was tired to the point of fainting, her limbs trembled with weakness and excitement, and her voice was hoarse almost to extinction from three hours of shouting in the dusty atmosphere, but she placed one hand on the friendly groom's shoulder to keep herself from falling, and resolutely continued the battle. She had once flirted with a coachman at the *Englischer Hof*, and she felt sure he would find a place for her property if she could pay for it.

"Really, gentlemen," she said at last, "if this is your last word, I must ask you to make way so that I can get out with my carriage."

This only brought them surging up to her again. They knew she could find a place, and they had not yet offered her more than half the market value of the horses alone. If she once got away from them, there were others who, while they did not care to descend to the squabble in the market-place, would gladly purchase the horses, at least, at a reasonable price. They began to bid again, going up by hundreds to seventeen thousand marks. As they would not go beyond this, Felicitas repeated her demand that they should make way for her. She would keep her property until her last mark was gone rather than sell it for a third of the advertised price.

The Jews now sent a delegate to her, one of their number who had apparently been directing the operations throughout the afternoon, and this persuasive gentleman talked to her for a quarter of an hour, and finally offered her eighteen thousand marks as a final bid. He told her he would withdraw the offer if she did not accept it in five minutes. He was making it only because he respected her intelligence and perseverance, and he knew he would lose by the transaction. No one could possibly give a *Pfennig* more for it than that.

But Felicitas resolutely shook her head. She

resented this man's assumption that he could speak for the crowd. There were a hundred other black-eyed, eagle-nosed faces in the ring around her who were waiting for a sign from her to come forward. She was getting savage with the long, terrible strain. She would keep them all waiting until it was dark, and then take her property away after all, no matter what they offered her, just to get even with them.

Then there was a stir from behind, and an elegantly dressed young man elbowed his way through the crowd. He was accompanied by a withered up little fellow in sporting costume with whom he conversed in voluble English. He sauntered up to the gentleman who was talking to Felicitas, and laid a finger on his shoulder.

"So, my friend," he said, "this is your little game!"

"I thought this carriage would just suit the *Herr Graf*," said the dealer, vainly trying to conceal his chagrin.

"What do you think of them, Jenkins?" said Graf Putzenstein to his friend, who was an English jockey.

"I'll have a look, Sir," replied Jenkins.

While he carried out his inspection, the Count turned to Felicitas.

"Well, my dear," he said, "they tell me you've been having a hard time of it."

"I don't mean to be cheated, *Mein Herr*."

She did not know who he was.

"And how much have they offered you for it, my treasure?" he asked.

"My price is fifty thousand marks, *Mein Herr!*"

"So! You seem to have an idea of things. What's the highest bid?" He turned to the bystanders.

The Jews held their peace.

"Eighteen thousand marks, *Herr Graf!*" piped someone in the crowd.

"I thought so! Where's that scoundrel Rosenberg?"

Rosenberg had discreetly disappeared.

"My *Gräfin* ought to like this," he said, half to himself, "seeing she won't have anything to do with motor cars. The turnout will astonish the natives, though! The carriage ought not to have been white, for our muddy roads, but the horses match. What do you think of them?" This in English, to Jenkins.

"Not 'arf bad! The four of them ought to fetch a couple of thousand quid!"

Count Putzenstein had a large Polish estate, which he had acquired together with a Polish

wife. The wife was still very young, and had been raised in the Polish wilderness, so she still cultivated and admired the barbaric splendour with which the nobility in the backwoods of Europe still live. She was afraid of motor cars, and had sent her husband to get a carriage suitable for her splendid progresses from one part of her estate to another. As it was her money he was spending, the Count did not care so much how he spent it.

"Well, my darling,"—this to Felicitas—"your price is a little too high. You'd never get half that much out of it from those fellows, as you can see for yourself; but my gracious consort happens to want just such a carriage. I told that rascally Rosenberg to look me up something, and he said he had it already on hand. The price we agreed on was forty thousand marks. He might have offered you at least twenty, and been content with a hundred per cent. profit, but then he's a Jew. I think you've earned the money, so you may as well have it. So let me write you out a cheque for forty thousand marks, and we'll call it done. It's really a good price, I assure you, on my word of honour! *Abgemacht?*"

Felicitas looked at him suspiciously. This might be some trick, but the Count's friendly,

smiling eyes as he stood, fountain pen and open cheque book in hand, reassured her, and she had noticed the deference of the crowd. Forty thousand marks was beyond her highest hopes.

"*Abgemacht!*" she agreed, at last. The Count wrote out the cheque, and explained to her how she should cash it, and where she should put the money for safety. A tremendous shout broke from the crowd. The Jews had vanished like Macbeth's "bubbles of earth." The Count was talking to his friend, evidently giving directions as to the care of the purchase, when an oft-reiterated phrase from the shouts of the crowd caught his ear. He laughed out loudly, and turned to Felicitas, who was still standing there, dazed and helpless.

"Come along, my dear," he said, taking her arm. "You'll never be able to get home through this crowd."

Before she realised what he was about, he had her in the carriage, and was seated beside her. She had just consciousness enough left to tell the coachman where she lived; then the horses started. All the way home the crowd shouted and cheered, while Count Putzenstein laughed until his sides ached, and wondered what his "gracious countess" would say if she saw

him sitting in her destined state carriage, with his arm around the half-fainting white-faced girl from whom he had bought it, nodding and smiling at the hilarious multitude.

Felicitas never could remember anything about it, save that it was a weird, unimaginable dream. All she could think of was her cheque, and that she held between her fiercely-cramped fingers. At last the shouts died away, and she was sobbing in her mother's arms.

She read all about it in the nine o'clock *Extrablatt* that evening.

A PICNIC.

"HURRY up, children! Aren't you ready yet? You know Father won't come at all if he has to wait. Be sure you don't forget anything."

"What's for lunch?" asked Curt.

"Roast veal, eggs, sandwiches, cheese, cake, and sausage. Did you put in some coffee, Gretchen? There! I nearly forgot the salt! Do think, children, if there's anything else!"

Frau Meyer had been up since three o'clock getting things ready, for picnics were serious affairs, and if anything was forgotten, or went wrong, Herr Meyer simply walked off and took the next train home.

The seaside holiday habit is not very strongly developed in East Prussia. Most people save their money to put into the savings-bank instead of the watering-places. In Königsberg the substitute for the summer holiday is an occasional picnic in Pillau or Cranz, or some one of the other little bathing-places on the *Ost-See* within an

hour's ride of the city. Sunday is the day almost universally chosen for such excursions, and if one is willing to travel fourth class, the expense is trifling indeed.

By nine o'clock the Meyers were already on the train, watching for glimpses of the sea as they approached Pillau. Curt had gone off just before they left Königsberg, saying that he would come by a later train.

"He's gone to see Felicitas," said Trudchen, "I shouldn't wonder if he brought her out with him. She'll be flush to-day, you know. What would you say, Mother, if he came up and introduced her as his betrothed?"

"He'd better not!" answered Frau Meyer. "Because she has won a few ragged (*lumpige*) hundreds at the lottery Curt needn't lose his head over her. She'll spend it soon enough, I dare say. Money isn't the only thing in the world. If she won a million she could never forget that her mother was a charwoman."

"*Na, na!*" said Herr Meyer, who usually affected moderate views when he was sober. "I fancy there are a good many people who would be glad to help her forget it if she had a million, or even a hundred thousand."

"They say she made the Jews pay the full price for her prize," put in Trudchen.

"The Jews? Didn't you hear that Graf Putzenstein bought it, and he is so ashamed of his bargain that he won't tell anybody how much he paid? And Felicitas hasn't told either; but it's not as much as most people fancy. I believe she was in league with the Jews just to get the Count into a trap, and she's probably had to fork over the biggest part of the proceeds."

The fine beach at Pillau is backed by beautiful groves of beech and fir, and the place is a favourite resort of the Königsbergers. Prussians organise their amusements quite as thoroughly and efficiently as their serious enterprises, and in Pillau it is possible to spend a pleasurable day at about a fifth of the cost of the same kind of an outing at an English watering-place. Under the trees at Pillau are dozens of restaurants and hundreds of tables, and although it is possible to obtain good (Prussian) food at reasonable rates, the recognised custom is that the picnickers bring their food with them, and the obliging restaurateur gives the use of his chairs and tables, demanding in return only the privilege of brewing coffee for the party at the nominal price of one half-penny per head, this price including milk

and sugar, but not the coffee itself, which the visitors bring with them, together with the rest of the food. Thus at a cost of about threepence a family of five can get coffee cooked for the whole party, together with the privilege of reserving chairs and a table for themselves throughout the day. The restaurateur gets his own back again when they begin drinking beer and other things later on, for these things they do not bring with them.

Mixed bathing is permitted almost everywhere in Prussia, but the common people do not often indulge in that pleasure, preferring a weekly scrubbing over the wash-basin in their own kitchens, unless they happen to live in the newer flats that are provided with bathrooms. Some of the vulgar rich try to imitate the aristocracy by lying about on the beach in the scantiest of costumes, thereby furnishing welcome subjects for the coarse pencils of the comic artists, for a Königsberg butcher's wife who has lived forty years on the fat of the land does not look dainty or attractive in a revue bathing-suit. Hence ordinary people do their bathing in private.

Gretchen and Trudchen were too old to go surf-wading, for the Prussian girl puts up her hair and lets down her skirts at the age of fifteen,

thereby missing the delectable "flapper" stage altogether. As they were strictly forbidden to flirt with anyone, Frau Meyer's girls amused themselves in a more substantial way, walking about between the trees, eating hard-boiled eggs and sandwiches, and begging from their father a glass of beer now and then to wash it down with. The exercise and fresh sea-breeze made it possible to stow away twice as much as they could conveniently manage at home. Father and mother sat at the table they had reserved, also lunching at intervals of an hour or so, and watching the new-comers as they entered the park. Herr Meyer drank beer steadily, with a tiny glass of rum or whiskey now and then by way of variety.

"*Mein Gott, Mann!*" Frau Meyer would exclaim, "You've had three shillings' worth already, and you haven't turned a hair! I wonder how much you spend when you come home really done for? You might have been a rentier living in your own house if it had not been for your accursed drinking habit!" And she sipped at her glass of *Damenliqueure* with thoughtful indignation.

Meanwhile Curt's "affair of heart" was passing through a curious but altogether characteristic

crisis. On the previous evening, after reading the story of Felicitas' triumph in the paper, he had gone to her house and asked to see her, but she was already asleep, and her mother refused to wake her. It was the first time he had ventured on a formal call, for he did not mean to let the girl get any hold on him. The first thing to do now, of course, was to find out how much money she had, and what she was going to do with it; and if reports were really true, he might venture on more definite advances. Ten thousand marks would not do, he knew, but twenty thousand was to be thought of, if he could persuade her to save it until he finished his course. He had the excellent taste to prefer a pretty girl of his own age with twenty thousand marks to some ugly spinster with fifty, or even a hundred thousand.

He must contrive to see her in some way as soon as possible. After a long private debate, he decided to write her a note and ask her to go with him to Pillau the next day. This was indeed risky, as it gave her documentary evidence. He had never met her before save on the street or in a café, and all their little excursions had been arranged by word of mouth only. He worded his letter as innocently as possible.

"My dear Fraülein,—We are going for a picnic to Pillau to-morrow. May I respectfully invite you to accompany us? My mother and sisters will be there. We hope to have a pleasant day, and plan to come home early. Unless you send me word to the contrary, I shall have pleasure in calling for you at nine o'clock.

"Your sincere friend,

"Curt Meyer."

Felicitas laughed aloud when she finished reading the letter.

"Mother, mother!" she cried, "see how the charm works! Here's a letter from Curt Meyer, about the most slippery fish I ever had in my net, actually signed, 'Your sincere friend!' In three years he'll be a *Herr Doktor*, and I'll be a *Frau Doktor*, perhaps! I suppose I must go with him, although I don't feel up to it, to-day. I wonder if he'll really introduce me to his mother? They're awfully stuck up, you know, seeing that they have a son in the University. The father is now a foreman at the Ost-Bahnhof, and the mother uses the full title, *Frau Obergepäckträger* Anna Meyer! (Mrs. Foreman-Luggage-Porter Anna Meyer). I believe they've saved a little money, and they don't mean their young hopeful

to marry out of the aristocracy. But I think I have him now. Perhaps I shall actually land him to-day. But it will not be easy, I know."

These latter sentences were thought rather than spoken, but the mother understood, nevertheless.

"Couldn't you put him off a day or so," she asked, anxiously, "until you feel better?" She felt that her daughter's whole life was at stake.

"If I were a little more sure of him, it would be the best way," admitted Felicitas; "but it's a little too risky. You know I've only my face and my little fortune, little Mother, although you're the dearest, bestest mother I ever had, and I don't ask for a better. But you'll be buried in a silk dress yet, mother, and four horses will draw you to the churchyard, and you'll have a stone over your grave! You would have never believed it, would you, little Mother?"

"But will you know how to behave yourself to his mother and sisters, my dear?"

"Never fear for that, Mother. Wasn't Frau Meyer herself out in service before she married? I think you told me she used to cook for the Lubinskis. Besides, Curt doesn't think of introducing me yet, you may be sure. He only wants

to get me by myself where he can ask me questions. That part of the note is only for you. He may not take me to Pillau at all. I doubt if he has money enough to pay the fare. His loving mother keeps him very close. But I think I shall surprise him to-day, for he can't imagine how much it is. That's what will tip him over. I must take the cheque with me. The Graf promised not to tell how much it was. Just think, Mother! I have actually spoken to a Graf, and asked him to do something for me! Curt's mother and sisters will be green with envy when I tell them, which I certainly shall if they don't treat me civilly."

Curt came punctually. He was dressed in his best, and knocked in due form at Frau Junker's humble door. He allowed himself to be introduced to the old woman, and even condescended to shake hands with her. Felicitas remembered that he had never offered to shake hands with *her*, although he had walked with his arm around her waist and kissed her more than once. She was almost alone in the world, playing for high stakes, and was compelled, therefore, to put up with many things.

But this morning he was respectful enough. He did not make her take his arm, nor did he offer

to pinch her cheeks or tickle her in the ribs even when they sat together in the nearly empty electric car on their way to the Pillauer Bahnhof. He was as polite as he knew how to be, in the abrupt, angular, Prussian fashion, which knows no delicatesse. She felt the difference at once, and knew to what it was due.

"I read all about it in the paper last night," began Curt, when they had said the ordinary things.

"Yes?" replied Felicitas. She meant to compel him to make all the advances.

"You know what I mean, about the lottery. I suppose you are quite rich now?"

"Compared with my former state, yes. But, of course, it is hardly a fortune."

"The paper did not say how much it was."

"No, I asked Graf Putzenstein not to tell." (She was bound to make as much of the Count as possible.) "I wanted to keep it as a surprise for—my friends."

"I suppose you number me among your friends?" asked Curt.

She glanced at him coyly.

"I hope so," she said at last. "I try to think so. Many have called themselves my friends in the past, but some have not proved to be

friends in the end. I never know how they will turn out. I try to believe you are my friend, and you have always been very good to me. You know I have always been a poor, defenceless girl, and sometimes my friends have been very rude to me."

Curt readily made a virtue of necessity, and prided himself on his involuntary gallantry. She had to watch some of her friends very closely, and had had more than one narrow escape, but she knew that a gallant with an empty pocket-book is usually quite harmless.

"I have always had a deep respect for you," Curt assured her. "You know we students are a rough and ready lot, and sometimes our spirits get away with us when we escape for a little while from the grind of our studies. But we mean it all right—at least *I* have never wanted to injure you in any way, Felicitas. Do you trust me, little girl?"

"I have trusted you always," replied the girl. "See, have I not come with you alone to-day? I have to trust those who claim to be my friends until they show the cloven hoof."

Curt had taken every personal liberty with her that a young Prussian may legitimately exercise towards his betrothed, and that is saying a good

deal, yet he had scrupulously avoided doing anything which might give her a hold on him. Nevertheless she took him at his word now. If she caught him at last, she could pay him back later at leisure.

By this time they were in the train, and as it was already late in the forenoon and most excursionists travelled fourth class, they easily obtained a third class compartment to themselves. Felicitas was always well-dressed, and to-day she had fixed herself up with special care. Her white summer frock showed off her figure and perfect complexion superbly. The mode of low-necked dresses for the street had not yet arrived in Prussia, but the bright pink ribbons supporting her camisole glowed through the transparent fabric of her very much "peek-a-boo" bodice, calling attention to the fact, as indeed they were intended to do, that an almost unimpeded view of a perfectly-moulded, white-skinned bust would reward the attention of the careful observer. Curt was not slow to notice this, and although the sight of female flesh was nothing new to the young medical student, he complimented his companion by telling her, in terms too coarse for literal translation, that it looked much more attractive viewed through a semi-transparent

veil than when lying all bare and cold and blue on the operating table.

"*Du bist heute rein zum anbeissen!*" (sweet enough to bite into) he continued, delighted by the blush his compliment had brought to her cheeks. Felicitas drew back into her corner. She meant to keep him at bay to-day.

"Don't be afraid," laughed Curt, "I'm not going to eat you! But you haven't told me yet how much it is."

"Why do you want to know?"

"Shall I tell you exactly?"

"Yes!"

Curt paused for a while.

"I don't think I will!" he said, at last.

The girl tried hard to conceal her disappointment, but Curt saw the tears gathering in her eyes. Her quivering lips and downcast eye-lids did more for her than all her finesse.

"I say!" he exclaimed, "don't be silly. You can't imagine what fights I've had with the old people about you. I'm not what you take me for. I'm really very fond of you, but you know how one is tied down when he is trying to study and his folks are not rich. If I should win some big prize, I'd run off with you to America the next day, and we'd

have a fine time. That would be fun, wouldn't it ? "

Felicitas looked up at him without a word. Indeed, the question was not an easy one for her to answer. She certainly had no desire to run off with him.

He seemed to realise something of the incongruous nature of his proposal.

" You know my folks are so stupidly unreasonable," he continued ; " they act as if they belonged to the nobility, at least. I never could take you home without a tremendous row."

" Not even with forty thousand marks ? "

Felicitas had, with unerring instinct, chosen the psychological moment for bringing up her last reserves. The effect was equal to her anticipations.

" Forty thousand marks ! You don't mean to say that you have forty thousand marks ? "

" Look for yourself ! " said Felicitas, handing him the cheque. Curt examined it carefully, and turned it over. There could be no mistake about it. A second later he had her in his arms, and the frills of her frock wilted down at his touch.

" The cheque, the cheque ! " she cried, pushing him away. He had carelessly laid it on the wooden

seat, and it had slipped through the slats upon the floor of the compartment. He soon recovered it and returned it to her.

"We'll get married now, whether mother likes it or not," he cried.

"Not now," she said, "but when you've finished your course."

Neither reminded the other how much each was taking for granted.

"But if they won't let me go on?" (He almost hoped they wouldn't).

"You must be a man and bring them around. They surely can't despise me so much now. Has your father as much as that in the bank?"

"I don't know," said Curt, suddenly unwilling to give up the superiority over her he had so long enjoyed. He knew his father did not have a third that much. There was two thousand marks for each of the girls, three thousand for the completion of his university course, and perhaps two or three more for emergencies. Curt knew even better than Felicitas the value of forty thousand marks in the matrimonial market. If he did not take her plenty of others would, and he might in the end have to put up with some hideous *Scheusal* (scarecrow) of a spinster with not a penny more.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked; "spend your money as fast as you can?"

"No fear! Graf Putzenstein told me to invest it in City bonds. They pay four and a half per cent."

"Then you won't need to touch your principal?"

"Certainly not. We shall be able to live on the interest for a year or two, if need be, until you get started."

"Oh, I shall manage to get a place as assistant in the hospital at once," said Curt. "The wage is not high to begin with, but there is every chance of rising if I have the stuff in me. I shall have as much as your interest from the start."

"*Also Abgemacht?*" said Felicitas, laughing and blushing. Curt suddenly remembered that although there had been no proposal, nor indeed any acceptance, he had hopelessly and irrevocably committed himself, if his honour was good for anything. He trembled to think of the coming interview with his parents, but he took the girl's hand in his and sat still for some moments, in a more serious and noble mood than he had ever experienced before. Like most Prussian students he had often talked of insurrection and mutiny, but the blood of half a dozen generations of iron

discipline was in his veins, and it was morally and physically almost impossible for one of his stock actually to rebel against parental or any other recognised authority. It would be easier for him to walk to certain death than to exercise the moral courage to disobey an order. Felicitas felt his mood, and knew she would have to stiffen him.

"Here we are in Pillau at last," she said. "Suppose we go and tell your parents at once. They can't make a fuss here in the park, and we must explain to them how it is. I think we can manage it. You're of age, you know, and they can't absolutely forbid it."

Curt thought it might be the best way out, although he felt all the premonitory symptoms of collapse. It was worse than the *Abiturienten Exam.*, which he had missed at the first shot.

It did not take them long to find the other Meyers. They were sitting together at their table, getting ready for the proper mid-day meal, when Trudchen suddenly whispered excitedly, "Look, Mother, look! There comes Curt with Felicitas. They're walking arm in arm, I do declare! And he's actually bringing her to speak to us! I thought he hadn't seen us!"

"Father and Mother," said Curt, with white lips and trembling voice, "allow me to present to you my betrothed, Fraülein Felicitas Junker."

The young girl curtsied in the Prussian style, and smilingly offered her hand. Herr Meyer had already reached the mellow stage of intoxication, and the picture of the beautiful blonde in her bewitching dress pleased his watery eye. He rose laboriously to his feet and took the girl's hand, and then sat down again with undignified suddenness after a vain attempt to think of something to say. Gretchen and Trudchen were too awe-struck to do anything but stare. Frau Meyer sat grimly in her chair, her hands folded in her lap, but she did not take her eyes from the girl's face. Curt nudged Trudchen's shoulder, and placed his new *Braut* in the chair which his sister hastily vacated at his touch. Then there was a great silence.

Curt had exhausted all his energies in the first attack, and could get no further. The girl looked from one stony face to another, and even the slowly filling eyes and strangely working lips of the half-drunk father could not give her much encouragement. She saw that Curt was helpless, and that she must carry it through herself.

"You are doubtless much surprised," she

said; "and so are we, for that matter. It is only my good luck in winning the lottery prize that enables us to engage ourselves privately even now. But we have known each other in a way for a long time, and now that I have a little capital of forty thousand marks, we felt that there could be no reasonable objection to our showing ourselves together."

"Forty thousand marks!" exclaimed Frau Meyer. "I don't believe it!"

"Be careful, Mother!" warned Curt. "You may look at the cheque yourself."

Frau Meyer looked, and passed it on to her *Mann*.

"Do you think it's genuine?" she asked.

"Hush, Mother!" whispered Trudchen, who was standing behind Frau Meyer's chair, "don't insult her!"

"It seems to be all right," said Herr Meyer. "You're a lucky girl. Have you really made up your minds, Curt?"

"Yes, Father. And I don't see how you can have any objections to the match. I could hardly do better, even according to your way of thinking."

"We'll talk of that later. Since you've decided the matter for yourself, I don't see that

there's much more to say. Of course, you needn't announce the engagement as yet."

"How long will it take you to run through the money?" demanded Frau Meyer, still staring at Felicitas.

"She's not going to touch the money at all!" answered Curt, "but is going to put it into the bank as soon as she gets the cheque cashed, every penny of it."

"Graf Putzenstein advised me to invest it partly in City bonds and partly in Imperial debentures," explained Felicitas. "They both pay four and a half per cent. interest. That will give me eighteen hundred marks (£90) a year, which is nearly twice my present salary at Blumenthal's. I shall keep on with my work for a year or so until a little interest accumulates, and then I shall give up my place and begin to get my *Aussteuer* ready. By the time Curt graduates I shall have, in addition to the forty thousand marks capital, savings to the amount of three or four thousand marks, which will be enough to get my things and furnish the house. Will Gretchen have more when she marries, Frau Meyer?"

Frau Meyer winced at this stab, which Felicitas had delivered, not in spite, but because she saw

it was the only way to gain her future mother-in-law's respect. Although she ignored the question, Frau Meyer was impressed by the girl's moderation and practical good sense. She knew that Curt had not laid out those judicious plans. She had also been sizing up the girl herself, and she could find no fault with her. Her dress was perfect in fit, style and workmanship, and everything else she had on, as could be seen fairly well, even from the outside, was spotlessly clean and without fault. Her whole outfit was perfect in every detail, not a hook or button missing, not a seam unfinished. Felicitas had not worked for five years in a fashionable draper's shop for nothing.

"Well," she said at last, in a not unconciliatory tone, "we'll see how you live up to your good resolves. Here comes the coffee now. You must be hungry."

DER MASKENBALL

"MOTHER, Mother!" cried Trudchen, running into the room, "dearest, bestest, onliest, little Mother! I want to ask you for something, only you must promise to let me have it before I ask!"

"What is it, child?"

"Do you promise to say 'yes'?"

"Certainly not!"

"But you must promise to say 'yes' before I tell you what it is, don't you see?"

"Of course I shan't promise anything of the kind!"

"But I won't tell you what it is at all if you don't promise to say 'yes'!"

"Then I'm afraid I shall have to remain in ignorance," replied Frau Meyer, drily.

"Oh, Mother! Don't be so nasty! You know what it is! You must let us go to the pastry-cooks' fancy-dress ball next week!"

"I couldn't think of it, child!" said the mother, decisively; "it would cost at least a hundred Marks."

"Oh, but we *must* go. The Woytsch girls are going, and Frau Woytsch is making them just the *beautifullest* costumes! And she told me she would help us make ours, and we could walk home afterwards, so it needn't cost so much, after all."

"It's quite out of the question! Curt is costing us more every year. You'll have to wait until next year, I'm afraid. You're only sixteen, you know."

"But Gretchen is nineteen, and she ought to go, and she won't go without me. And they say lots of students have bought tickets, and even some officers from the garrison are coming over to have some fun, and you know some of them are sure to stay for the dancing. We really must go!"

At this Frau Meyer began to consider the proposal more seriously. She had taken the girls to two balls during the previous season, but had been disappointed with the results. It was a rather expensive method of placing her girls in the matrimonial market, for a fancy dress could only be worn once. It was much cheaper to parade them in the *Tiergarten* in summer, and take them to concerts or the theatre in the winter; but it was necessary after displaying one's goods to give prospective customers a chance to indicate

their choice, and the untrammelled freedom of the masquerade, together with the general licence for dancing which followed the supper, gave the young men ample opportunity to make their selections and begin an acquaintance that might be continued afterwards, for common custom forbade any girl to refuse her hand to any partner who presented himself, save on account of a previous engagement.

Thus it happened that when Curt entered the kitchen from the corridor one afternoon a few days later, he was greeted by a chorus of squeals as his very much undressed sisters scurried into the other room and slammed the door. Curt stood for a moment and surveyed the scene with a superior, sarcastic, student grin. A large basin of dirty soap-suds stood on the floor in the middle of the room, and all the chairs were draped with crumpled towels and soiled female undergarments. He took a step forward, slipped on a stray piece of wet soap, upset the basin of water, and sat down in the resulting puddle.

"*Himmel Sakrament! Tausend Donnerwetter!*"

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" said Trudchen, opening the door a little and looking through the crack. "*Gott im Himmel!* What an awkward ass you are!"

Curt got up, and was about to break out again.

"Don't swear any more," interposed Gretchen, "but go out and take a walk while we clean up your mess. It's a good thing we hadn't begun to dress."

"What do you mean by leaving soap and things lying about on the floor?" demanded Curt.

"What do you mean by coming into the kitchen without even knocking, when you know we're washing and dressing ourselves?" retorted Trudchen.

"How should I know what you were up to?"

"You know, the Masked Ball. You're going yourself."

"But that's this evening, and it's not three o'clock yet. You don't need half a day to dress in!"

"What do you know about ladies dressing?"

"Ladies? Oh, I say! It's come to that, has it? But as it happens, I know quite a lot about ladies dresses and ladies dressed—also something about ladies undressed. Why can't you wash your faces and put on a frock and go to the ball? It wouldn't take half an hour. And here you are, washing yourselves from head

to foot in a dish of dirty water, and putting on clean things, I dare say, from the very skin, as if it were your wedding day. Who cares what you wear under your dresses?"

"*You* don't care, I know, but what if there should be an accident, or one of us should faint? One of your dirty-nosed, unfinished young medical *Kandidaten* would be tearing open our clothes and pouring iced lemonade down our necks. What would he think if we weren't clean?"

"He wouldn't stop to look," asserted Curt. "Do you think other people are as finicky as you? There was a Jewish woman at the clinic to-day to be examined for a tumour, and I declare —I won't say anything more about it."

"Thanks!" said Trudchen, "I don't want to hear it. Get out, now! We must clean up before Mother comes in."

"But it's snowing outside," objected Curt, "and that half-starved English student is in the front room. Besides, my trousers are wet through, and I must stand by the fire till they dry. If I go out now they'll freeze on!"

"You can't come in here," said Trudchen, decidedly; "at least, not until we get our petticoats on."

By this time the door between them was half open, and Curt's good nature was perfectly restored.

"Come and kiss me, my dear!" he said, "you look like a peach in your new, clean chemise!"

"Get out! If you push the door, I'll scream!"

"Well, I must come in. You go into the bedroom for a moment until I get into a chair by the window with my back to you, and then you can scoot into the kitchen and finish your mysterious ceremonies there."

"You give us your word of honour not to look round?"

"Why should I want to look?"

"Never mind! Promise!"

"I give you my solemn word of honour not to peep!"

Curt had a high regard for his word of honour, and he usually managed to keep it. As soon as his back was turned, the girls scurried into the kitchen, and showed their confidence in him by slamming the door, shoving the table against it, and putting the key into the key-hole.

"The little sillies!" he said to himself. He had just come back from witnessing a serious operation in the *Frauenklinik*.

Curt went into the bedroom looking for further adventure. On one of the beds lay the two fancy dresses in perfect spotless state, and near them, equally spotless, petticoats, stockings, handkerchiefs, scarfs, sashes, ribbons, gloves, and little white French shoes. He was sorely tempted to perpetrate some practical joke by tampering with the girls' finery, but he knew his mother would take it very seriously, and perhaps cut off his supply of pocket-money for a fortnight, so he heroically desisted. He still had before him the task of getting a ten Mark piece out of her for the expenses of the evening.

"I wonder what Felicitas will wear," he soliloquised, casting another longing glance at the tempting array of *frou-frou* on the bed. He would have to fetch her in a taxi. That would cost two Marks. He hoped she already had her ticket. In any case he would have to pay for the supper, and treat her at least once or twice, to say nothing of buying her a nosegay. Felicitas was wisely tactful, yet his lack of money sometimes brought him into painful predicaments when he was with her, and although she always pulled him as gracefully and inconspicuously out of the hole as possible, he felt a distinct and very uncomfortable sensation of inferiority whenever

he was with her. He told himself that if she were not so " devilish pretty " he would give her up.

* * * *

At eight o'clock that evening when the taxi stopped before the house in the *Georgstrasse,* the inhabitants of the neighbouring flats all appeared at their respective windows to see the show. As the two girls came out of the house and down the steps in their new pink-lined evening mantles and white scarfs, instead of the usual shawls, a murmur of hushed exclamations greeted them.

" What's up ? " asked the wife of a Polish Jew, who had recently moved into the street.

" Oh, it's Frau Meyer taking her girls to the Masked Ball," explained another woman who had lived there for some years. " I can't imagine how they afford it," she went on ; " the father is only a luggage-porter. There's something crooked somewhere !"

The taxi snorted defiantly at this remark, and then slid gently around the corner into the *Vorstadt,* followed by the stare of a hundred envious eyes.

Thoroughness and efficiency of organisation are the supreme Prussian virtues, and in no department are they more strikingly illustrated

than in the matter of public amusements. The ball to which the Meyers were going was given by the Confectioners' and Pastry-cooks' Guild. They had taken one of the finest halls in Königsberg. There was nothing wanting in the decorations to indicate that the function was not to be patronised by the local aristocracy. The artificial palm garden which served to conceal the best military stringed orchestra in the Province, the spotless drapery and glistening crystalline display on the long lines of dining tables, the perfect condition of the great dancing floor, and the brilliant yet not too glaring illumination were all a revelation to the English student of what a fancy-dress ball at Covent Garden *might* be. Yet the price of admission was two shillings for masqueraders and one shilling for spectators in the gallery; and at twelve o'clock an excellent and ample supper would be served at a charge of one-and-six per head.

In the dressing-rooms the Meyers found their old friends, the Woytsches. This family belonged to a very different, yet hardly less common type than that of the Meyers, and is worthy of a brief introduction. Herr Woytsch was a tailor, an expert trouser-maker, and with the help of his wife and daughters, who did the pressing,

button-holes, etc., he commonly earned from five to ten pounds a week, working fifteen hours a day, and sometimes seven days in the week. He worked in his own home, his employer being glad to send the work to him and fetch it again. But Frau Woytsch was a placid, good-natured, easy-going, non-thrifty woman, born in a Saxon village, and had not been finished off in the Prussian machine. Consequently the Woytsches lived up to their income; that is to say, they dressed well and ate well, and did not save any money. The girls were plain and uninteresting, their complexions blotched and pimply from too much good food and no exercise, their eyes small and faded, their hair of that inconspicuous, almost colourless hue that often results from the blend of yellow-haired Saxon and brown-haired Lithuanian. Nevertheless, their parents were ambitious for them, and the father, more particularly, did all he could for them by taking them everywhere and bringing to their home all the young men he could ensnare. But he failed to do the only thing that would ever have procured them husbands, which was, to save up for them liberal marriage portions.

The demand for husbands is so great in East

Prussia that it is the universal custom for the bride to furnish the house and provide for all the wedding expenses. There is a saying that the groom need only have a frock coat and a bouquet of flowers. Consequently girls begin to save money towards their marriage dowers when they are five or six years old. Fifty pounds is about the minimum sum for which a girl of the lower classes can purchase a husband of the most ordinary type. If the bride by any lack of foresight or other misfortune does not have at least that amount, her father is bound to borrow the money for her, or furnish her house on the instalment plan on his own responsibility. One result of this custom is that the houses of the working classes in Prussia are perhaps more solidly and comfortably furnished than those of any other similar class in the world. But a girl who aspires above the rough, labouring class has no chance at all unless she is uncommonly well-favoured, or is known to have at least two or three hundred pounds in the savings bank.

Lottie and Irma, Herr Woytsch's daughters, had neither fair faces nor fortunes, and they were doomed to lives of bitter disappointment in spite of all their father's desperate but

misdirected efforts on their behalf. They could never understand why the Meyer girls were so much more lucky than they, and always had partners enough at the dances, while they were invariably let severely alone after removing their masks, and if they danced at all had to take their father as a partner. They could not see that the Meyer girls were so *very* much better looking than they, and certainly they did not dress better. They did not know that Frau Meyer's reputation for close-fistedness did more for her daughters' social success than the girls' healthy, blooming cheeks and well-laundered frocks.

They were all in the general dressing-room, inspecting each other's dresses and trying on their masks. Gretchen and Trudchen were fixed up as twin violets (they nearly always dressed alike), and their frocks, with elbow sleeves and discreet little square décolletages, while looking fresh and attractive, were neither unconventional nor original. Indeed, the promoters of these essentially middle-class functions looked askance at extreme costumes and discouraged them. Lottie Woytsch, nevertheless, was dressed as a three-year-old baby in Prussia is commonly photographed, that is, in a very short skirt, sleeveless

bodice, flowered "sun-bonnet," and little black patent-leather shoes with white stockings showing for an inch or two above them. As long as she kept her mask on, she looked "cute" enough as she stood in a corner with her finger in her mouth, and she drew many admirers. Most people took her for a girl of twelve, and chucked her under the chin and patted her cheek accordingly. She knew, however, that when the masks were removed her time would be over.

"Oh, Lottchen!" exclaimed Trudchen, coming up to her chum and noticing her short skirt for the first time in the brilliant light of the central salon, "how can you let the men see your bare legs? You might at least have put long stockings on!"

"Why, aren't my legs as good as my arms?" demanded Lottchen.

"Perhaps they are, but *I* couldn't do it!"

"Well, then, you don't need to!" replied Lottie, half in vexation and half in despair.

"But you're enjoying yourself, aren't you, Lottchen?" admitted Trudchen. "Only three men have spoken to me as yet, and they've been standing around you all the time."

Trudchen could afford to be generous. Her triumph would come when she uncovered her pretty face.

"Oh, there comes Curt and Felicitas," said Trudchen, looking through the wide door into the lobby. "I wonder what makes them so late? I must go and see what she is wearing."

Curt had a bulky cylindrical package under one arm, and carried a large bouquet in his hand. He was perspiring, and evidently not in the best humour. The package must have been heavy.

"You may unfasten my cloak," said Felicitas, turning to him as she threw off her scarf. A gasp of astonishment escaped from the onlookers as she stepped out of her mantle. She appeared in a regulation Prussian court ball frock, with a short train and a tight-fitting bodice, cut low to the limit of conventionality, and quite sleeveless. Indeed, the dress was a somewhat abridged copy of the wedding costume worn by a prince's bride a few weeks before at her wedding in Berlin.

Frau Meyer was the first to speak.

"You surely don't mean to show yourself in *that* outfit?" she exclaimed; "why, I never saw anything like it! Besides, it isn't a fancy dress at all."

Even Curt was shocked, and although his tastes were not particularly delicate, he would

hardly have brought her if he had seen the dress beforehand.

"Wait a little!" said Felicitas. "Curt, undo my package, please!"

Curt was getting tired of being ordered about in this fashion, but he obeyed. The girl unrolled a long piece of stiff, fine, white damask, which she draped over one shoulder and around the lower part of her body. The package also contained a tiara and a sceptre; and in two minutes she had transformed herself into a most life-like and convincing Germania. As she slowly walked down the great central salon, one group after another turned to stare at her, and there was a general hush. Then she took up her position against the dark red wall, under a chandelier, and the effect was so irresistible, that a burst of applause broke from the masqueraders, and shouts of *Hoch, Germania!* startled the loiterers in other apartments, and brought them hurrying into the hall. Not one woman in a thousand had the figure or complexion to be able to show herself in so severe a costume. The white damask glistened like purest marble in the bright, artificial light, and the girl's right arm and shoulder, left bare to hold the sceptre, were hardly less dazzling, while the drapery was just stiff enough

to hang perfectly in the statuesque folds which Felicitas had arranged. With one accord the masqueraders escorted the new divinity to a chair, raised the chair upon a table in lieu of a dais, and paid homage to her as the Queen of the Masque. Of course, the whole thing was more suitable for a tableau, and the effect might easily have been spoiled if Felicitas had not been equal to the strain of sitting straight and almost motionless for two hours. She never faltered, however, and the envious women who began to make their way through the throng of male adorers for the purpose of a critical inspection did not venture to voice their jealousy. Even her pink mask, invisible at a distance, was so skilfully arranged that it disguised her perfectly without spoiling the "Germania" effect.

"Do you know who she is?" asked Hans Köppel, one of Curt's fellow-students.

"I have an idea," said Curt, scenting a possible chance to replenish his exchequer without any risk; "but you must guess for yourself."

"I'll bet it's some old woman," said Hans; "only old women attempt such *tours de force* at a pastry-cooks' ball. Last time there were three freaks here; as long as they wore their masks they looked absolutely ripping, but when

they took them off, *pfui!* They turned out to be the veriest old hags!"

"How much will you bet that this Germania is not over twenty?" asked Curt.

"You seem to know more about her than you will admit," replied Herr Kandidat Köppel, suspiciously.

"Well, I told you I had an idea. What odds will you give that I don't take her in to supper?"

"You? Since when have you begun to fancy yourself? You can't get near her! She'll not come with anyone under a full-fledged Lieutenant. Look how they swarm around her, and she as cool as a cucumber! My word, she understands it, though!"

"Will you bet?" demanded Curt.

"Bet what? Oh, that you don't take her in to supper? Sounds like a sporting offer. You'll want big odds, I suppose? What can you lay down?"

"Ten to a hundred!"

"Very well; taken! The certainty of earning ten marks may keep me awake until the dancing begins."

Curt produced the ten mark piece he had extracted from his mother an hour before, Köppel took a blue bank note from his pocket, and the

money was duly deposited with an obliging third.

"Who are those two girls you were talking to?" asked Köppel.

"My sisters."

"I thought your sisters were grown up."

"So they are, but you know a slender girl in a short dress always looks like a child. My sisters always get partners enough when they take their masks off."

Köppel wasn't having any, however, but turned his attention to Lottie Woytsch.

"I'm going to ask that baby to let me take her to supper," he said; "she's the cunningest thing here. She can't object if I carry her down in my arms."

"Do!" said Curt, with a sardonic grin; "I wish you much joy!"

While the masks were worn, everyone addressed his neighbour, known or unknown, by the familiar *Du*, and there was liberty and licence for every sort of prank. The students pinched the cheeks of every girl they met, and got their ears boxed by way of recompense. Trudchen had one of her shoes whisked off by a daring second lieutenant, and he led her a wild chase in and out among the laughing groups, who handicapped the

marauder by getting in his way and forming rings around him through which he had to break. When Trudchen finally sat down and sulked, he came back and offered to return the shoe if he might replace it on her foot. To this she unwisely acceded, upon which he found or made a hole in the sole of her thin silk stocking, into which he got his finger, and couldn't get it out again until she screamed and kicked him in the face with her other foot. Lottie Woytsch, in her baby clothes, was surreptitiously decorated from behind by a large card advertising a well-known brand of English baby-food, which enjoyed a great vogue in Germany for some time on account of its use for the Crown Prince's babies. She walked about as a one-sided sandwich girl for half an hour before discovering why everyone was laughing at her. The quieter girls who had no taste for horseplay sought refuge with their mothers in the gallery.

Felicitas enjoyed her triumph for a long time. The elite of the masqueraders vied with each other in paying her attentions, but she treated them all alike, punished severely any who tried to take undue liberties with her, and consistently refused all applicants for the honour of taking her to supper. This fact, coupled with the suspicion

that she was perhaps some elderly actress with a well-preserved complexion but hideous face, caused the crowd around her to thin as the supper hour approached, and when Curt came to help her down from the table, he found no rival, although many eyes followed the couple as he conducted her to the dressing-rooms.

Of course, she could not dance or dine in her Imperial paraphernalia, so when she entered the dining hall on Curt's arm, with a light shawl thrown over her shoulders, she was recognised by many as the heroine of the lottery adventure. Everyone admitted that her daring dress was essential to the high part she had chosen to play, and that her mask was the masterpiece of the evening. And if Curt had not taken the trouble to engage her for two or three dances, he would have been entirely cut out by the throng of applicants who surrounded her as soon as supper was over.

Herr Köppel was disgusted with the dinner partner he had chosen. Poor Lottie's baby-dress looked unmistakably silly when she removed her mask, and her flat, pimply face and uncertain eyes were revealed. Herr Köppel cursed his luck under his breath; he was usually very unfortunate at fancy dress balls. But he had to escort

her to the table with such grace as he could, and was immediately taken charge of by Lottie's father. That over-anxious, misguided Papa at once ordered several bottles of wine and the best cigars to be had, and made such energetic conversational attacks on the unfortunate young man that it was impossible to escape. As soon as supper was over, he took him to the buffet, and treated him to everything he could think of, and then brought him back to the ladies. Herr Köppel had just lost a hundred marks to Curt by what seemed to him a not very honourable trick, and he resolved to revenge himself on society in general by drinking and smoking all he could at Herr Woytsch's expense.

He did not propose to go any further, however. When the music for the cotillon struck up, instead of engaging his supper partner for the dance, which by all the rules of Prussian masquerades he should have done, he settled back in his chair, folded his arms, and remarked superciliously: "Well, I see most of the people are going to make idiots of themselves as usual, but I propose to sit here and watch the silly goose-trot at a safe distance!"

Herr Woytsch turned red and white by turns; his wife looked ready to explode, and poor

Lottie turned her face away. She would not give the rude young man the satisfaction of seeing her handkerchief. Herr Köppel coolly smoked one of Herr Woytsch's cigars during the first two dances. Then the Meyer girls, who were already in good demand, came out to rest for a few moments and sat down with the Woytsches. Seeing that they belonged to the same party, Herr Köppel promptly engaged Trudchen for the next dance, and presently led her off without a glance at the furious Woytsches. But when he tried to repeat the manœuvre half an hour later, Trudchen refused.

"You haven't danced with Fraülein Woytsch, yet, I think," she said. "I believe you took her to supper."

"I had just that abominable luck," admitted Herr Köppel; "but really I can't dance with her. Besides, her father has nearly devoured me alive. If I dance with the girl it will be all up with me."

"Then you'd better go and join some other party!" said Trudchen, hotly. "You'll not get *me* to dance with you again!"

"Not if I go and dance with the little silly now by way of penance?"

Trudchen had no desire to dance with him,

and her card was nearly full, but if she could thereby save her friend's face, why not?

"Well," she consented, "I am free for the mazurka, three dances on."

"Shall I tell her she owes the dance to you?" asked Köppel.

"It would be just like you!"

Köppel went over to Lottie and made her a tremendous Prussian bow.

"I'm sorry, Fraülein," he began, "that I was so remiss, but just after dinner I had to pay out a hundred marks to that rascal, Curt Meyer, and it put me in such bad humour that I made up my mind not to dance at all. But now I begin to realise what I have missed. May I beg the honour of taking you to the next dance, if you are still free?"

The last words were needlessly cruel, for she knew that he knew that her card was quite blank. Nevertheless she rose wearily without a word, and allowed him to lead her off. Trudchen Meyer felt that she had done at least one good act that evening.

It was six o'clock in the morning when the revel began to break up. Most of the masqueraders walked home, although they had arrived in taxicabs. The Meyers and the Woytsches went

together, and Herr Köppel, who had danced with both the Meyer girls, and at last with Irma Woytsch as well, as the price of a final waltz with Trudchen, accompanied them. They arrived at Woytsch's house first, and Herr Köppel was not allowed to get any further.

"Come right upstairs," said Herr Woytsch; "you will want a little refreshment after the fatigues of the night. My wife will have breakfast ready in no time." There was really no escape.

In a few minutes they sat down to a hearty meal of bread and butter, cold veal, hot fried sausages, cheese, and finished up with coffee and cake. It was getting light when Herr Köppel finally got away, after being most pressingly invited to come to dinner or supper whenever he could, and not to miss the card party on Thursday evening. Herr Woytsch spent fifty pounds a year in entertaining young men, often working all night to earn the necessary money. There were many who were shameless enough to take advantage of his hospitality without ever dreaming for a moment of paying any attentions to either of his daughters. Frau Meyer never thought of inviting a young man to come to her flat, and was looked upon as a shrewd and capable woman

in consequence, and would have no difficulty in disposing of her girls.

Felicitas had a trying half-hour that morning with her new *fiance*. He had treated her royally throughout the later hours of the night, with the proceeds of his rather shady transaction with Herr Köppel. They had eaten ices and cream cakes together, and drunk three bottles of the most expensive wine on the list, and when he came to take her home he brought a twenty-shilling box of the finest liqueur-filled chocolates, and insisted on her going home in a taxi; but the heavy wine had gone to his head, and he pretended to be jealous and angry. She had acquiesced in his every whim throughout the evening, given him all the dances he demanded, and gone with him to supper, and doubtless it was the unwonted sense of his own inferiority that put him into such bad humour. He accused her of fishing for a better "partie," and acted in a way which would have fully justified any such purpose on her part. He found fault with her for showing herself in such a scanty bodice, and then made her take off her cloak and submit to a searching scrutiny in the cold, unfriendly morning light. He had breakfast with her and her mother in their little home, and grumbled

over the coffee and buttered bun like a city apprentice in a village inn. In short, he acted the male tyrant in the most approved Prussian style, and drove his long-suffering betrothed almost to the point of quarrelling with him. At last she sent him home to sleep off his wine, telling him she must change her clothes and get to her desk at Sonnenschein's by eight o'clock. And no one in the great department store noticed that she had been up all night, or recognised in her the heroine of the bal-masque.

TRUDCHEN'S FUTURE.

THE Rector of the *Vorstadt* parish was an enthusiast on the higher education of women. Trudchen Meyer had distinguished herself greatly at school, and had won a scholarship that would have carried her through the seminary, and eventually the university itself, although in Prussia women with a university education are exceedingly rare. But Frau Meyer would not allow her to proceed.

The Rector had called several times about it, making the most seductive offers. He was willing to take the girl into his own house and keep her until she finished her education. Nevertheless Frau Meyer was obdurate.

"Why is it?" asked the Rector in a final attempt, "that you send your son to the university, and allow such a gifted girl as Trudchen, who would certainly make a brilliant student, to drudge at home as an umbrella maker?"

"The business of a healthy girl is to be married and have a family," said Frau Meyer. "No sensible girl is satisfied with any other calling in life. If Trudchen were lame, or ugly, now, I should let her be trained as a teacher, but she has education enough for ordinary life. What good will French and music and such fripperies be when she has a husband and three or four children to care for?"

"I suppose we shall never be able to convince our good people of the value of education in itself," replied the Rector, rubbing his hands in despair, "or get them to see that the human soul is more worthy of cultivation than the human body. Why do you value education merely as a financial investment? Can't you understand that life with a good education is better and higher and nobler than without it?"

"I can't see what good it will do Trudchen to have her head turned with new-fangled notions. She'll not care for housework or children if she gets her head set on your arts and sciences. She'll want a rich man for a husband, and be unhappy and discontented because she won't be able to get one. She'll want to marry, and five thousand marks in the savings bank will help her to a good husband better than all the

French in the world, and make her happier in life, too."

"When I first came to East Prussia I wondered why all the lady school-teachers were cripples and humpbacks," said the Rector. "Now I see why it is. No normal girl, according to your ideas, cares for an education, and only those who know they can't get married go in for teaching. But think of the children! How will they get on under such teachers, who regard their calling simply as a necessary nuisance, a bitter means of livelihood? Do you think such teachers will make school-life pleasant? Now a girl like your Trudchen, with a little more education, would enter a schoolroom like a sunbeam, and teach the children with such enthusiasm that learning would be a pleasure, instead of the awful grind on soul and body it is at present in most schools."

"It may be as you say," admitted Frau Meyer, somewhat mystified, "but I know Trudchen would never be willing to give up all thought of ever having a home of her own."

"That is not at all a necessary condition," protested the Rector. "There is no reason why she should not marry after a few years of such activity, and I can assure you that there are

educated men among us who are looking for educated wives—women who will be able to sympathise with them in their work, and perhaps even help them."

"A woman's work is in her home," said Frau Meyer, decisively, "and she has no more business to bother her head about her husband's work than he has to meddle with hers. But seeing you've taken such an interest in Trudchen, I will tell you exactly, Herr Rector, why I cannot consent to your plan. I know what girls are, and what young men are, especially the aristocracy. Trudchen is an innocent, foolish girl, and she is not to be trusted, even in your house, Herr Rector, where many young men call and visit. A girl is easily ruined, and the man thinks nothing of it, and the only safeguard nowadays is for the girl's mother never to let her get out of her sight.

"I had a sister once, a beautiful girl. We lived on a farm near Insterburg. There was a Graf's castle about a mile away, and the Gräfin took an interest in us, because my mother was the daughter of the old forester. My sister, Minna, sometimes went to the castle with freshly-picked wild strawberries or mushrooms, which they were glad to get, and repaid with generous

interest in the form of game and left-over confectionery from their festivals. And whenever she heard that one of us was ill, the Gräfin always sent a bottle of good wine.

" As I told you before, Minna was a beautiful girl, with long, wavy black hair reaching below her knees, a face of *Milch und Blut*, and a bosom like a snów-drift. There was a young Count visiting, Graf von Arnheim—shame be forever on the name!—who saw my sister come and go and waylaid her in the park. The poor child was too frightened and overawed to cry out, and too stupid to tell her mother what had happened. She went out to service a few weeks later to a family in Insterburg, and presently came home again, having been turned out of the house with shame and insult.

" But my father was a righteous man, although he was a farmer, and although it is I who say it, he spoke better than our old Pastor, and was often called to conduct funerals, and make speeches on other occasions. He sued the Count, but the man was a cowardly scoundrel, admitting misconduct, but denying the child, and my father's lawyer was little better, and allowed himself to be bribed. My father lost the case, and had to pay a thousand marks expenses.

"But he carried it up to the next court, swore that he would never go near another lawyer, and conducted the case himself. I can remember to-day every word of the long speech he made after calling his few witnesses. Minna, my poor sister, had to stand hour after hour facing the court with her child in her arms, weeping herself while she hushed its cries and stilled its hunger.

"My father told the whole story with irresistible appeal. He pointed to the Count, who sat shamelessly grinning on the other side, and told him exactly what he was, and no one could deny it. He pointed to my sister, and told the people to look at her face, and see if anything but purity and innocence was there. He told them to look at the child's yellow hair, the colour of the Count's, while Minna's was black, and said that although he loved the innocent little babe as his own grandchild, he hoped it would die young if it had inherited its character from its father. Before he finished, groans and sobs filled the court-room, and when he sat down there could be no question as to the verdict. That bad man had to pay the expenses of both trials, and also something for the support of the child, but how much, do you think? Our wonderful Prussian law only

enabled the judge to order him to pay twelve marks (12s.) a month!

"The Gräfin was terribly grieved over the matter, and always sent the child all the clothes it needed, so it always looked like a little princess; and when it died, at the age of three, she gave it a fine funeral. Minna seemed to get over the affair, and after three years married a shoemaker who knew her story, and was willing to take her nevertheless. But her spirit was broken. She lived only two years after her marriage.

"And our mother made the rest of us girls promise—there were six of us in all—never to go out to service in a family of the nobility, and never to let a daughter of ours be a governess or anything that would bring her into contact with people of that class. There are always bad men in such society, who think no more of ruining a poor girl than of shooting a pheasant. And you may say what you please, Herr Rector, but Trudchen shall stay at home under her mother's wing as long as I can keep her, or until she has a home of her own and a husband to protect her. Now I've told you the whole story, and I think you will understand why my decision is final."

TRAGEDY.

TRUDCHEN went over one afternoon to her Aunt Helene's, who lived in another part of the city. She bought a box of sweets on the way for her little seven-year-old cousin, and was invited, in turn, to remain for supper.

"Hans will be in before long," said the mother, "and his father ought to be here now. I hope the boy brings a good report. He was down three last time, and there was an awful row."

Herr Hartmann was a Customs-house official, earning a good salary, but they more than lived up to it and were deeply in debt. Their only son, Hans, went to the "Gymnasium" or grammar-school, partly because of his parents' ambitions for him, and partly because he had been *ausgepeitscht* in the *Realschule* (Technical school) for drawing a caricature of one of the masters there. The cane is used so freely in Prussian schools for such minor sins as inattention, carelessness, and laziness, that the

only punishment left for deliberate offences is to take the culprit into the teachers' room and let each one of them thrash him in turn. The Hartmanns used the "stick" often enough themselves, but they thought the punishment in this case too great for the offence, so they removed their boy to another school. He was not a very good student, and it required all their attention to keep him up with his class. The hours of school were from seven to one in the summer, and from eight to one in the winter, six days in the week, and the amount of home-work assigned required several hours' work daily for a pupil of ordinary ability.

Trudchen gave the little seven-year-old Lenchen her supper, undressed her, and put her to bed. The houses in Königsberg are built so warmly, and in such compact blocks, that even in winter the children commonly sleep in a single little sleeveless chemise instead of a night-gown or pyjamas, especially when the bedrooms, as is usually the case, open directly into the living-room, or the beds are set up in the living-room itself, as not infrequently happens in a crowded home.

"There comes my husband," announced Aunt Helene, as a step was heard in the corridor. "I wonder where Hans is?"

"I'll hide under the sofa and scare him!" exclaimed Trudchen. "He sits on the sofa, doesn't he?"

The Prussian living-room nearly always contains a sofa, and the dining-table is usually pushed up to it for the meals to save bringing in extra chairs from other rooms. Many Prussian paterfamilias invariably have their meals while sitting on the sofa.

Aunt Helene smiled at the girl's whim. She knew there would be a hub-bub, but her husband liked it.

Herr Hartmann entered the room and sat down in the one easy-chair. His wife brought him his warmed slippers, unfastened and removed his boots, helped him out of his official coat, and then drew off his trousers, which also formed a part of his uniform and must not be worn at home.

At last he was arrayed in his home clothes—dressing gown and slippers—and went over to take his place on the sofa before the table was pushed up. Trudchen lay still as a mouse, although her bones were beginning to ache.

"Where's Hans?" asked the father.

"He went to the swimming-baths after dinner. I don't know why he hasn't come."

"Isn't this the day for his standing?"

"I forgot to ask him for it. I suppose he has it in his pocket."

Herr Hartmann was in the middle of his first cup of coffee when something that had got between his slipper and the stockinged sole of his foot began to tickle him. He jumped up with an oath that nearly upset the table. Aunt Helene and Trudchen both laughed outright.

"Oh, that's what it is!" he exclaimed, dragging the struggling girl out from beneath the sofa. "Now I'll show you a thing or two!"

He tickled her and kissed her all over the face and neck, in spite of her slaps and scratches, till her hair was down and her blouse burst open behind from collar to waist.

"Have you had enough?" he asked, as she sat back on the sofa, weak from laughing and blown with the exercise. Trudchen pulled herself together and admitted that she was quite satisfied.

"You mustn't challenge my *Mann*," said Frau Hartmann, wiping the tears from her own eyes, "unless you want the full twenty rounds."

Then the bell rang, and Trudchen ran to admit Hans. The thirteen-year-old boy's white, pasty face lighted up a little when he found his cousin

there, but it quickly settled into gloom again, for he knew that even Trudchen's presence would not help him in this case.

"Let's see your standing!" said his father.

"The teacher isn't fair!" he burst out, sullenly, as he handed the fatal card over to his mother; "he sets boys over me just because their fathers are richer than mine, and sometimes send him presents."

Herr Hartmann knew there was some favouritism in the Gymnasium, but the term-examinations were conducted by an independent authority, and there was little chance of unfair treatment there. The boy's place had shifted from 28 to 36.

"That's no excuse," replied the father, "for a drop of eight points. I've warned you that your home-work has not been quite up to the mark of late. There's been too much swimming and football this term. Come here!"

Herr Hartmann made his dispositions with the easy precision of an expert. The table was moved up close to the sofa, and the unresisting boy shoved in between these two articles of furniture and bent over with his face on the table, so that his trousers were stretched tight (*stramm gezogen*) and his feet caught immovably

by the sofa. The cane was at hand on the shelf, and the torture began. Neither the boy's cousin nor his mother offered any protest at first, for success in school work is vital, and they knew no other means of securing it.

Hans bore the first twenty-five or thirty cuts in teeth-gnashing silence. He had been looking forward to the inevitable all day, and was fairly used to it. He knew he had let his school work slide during the month, but there were so many things one might get thrashed for that it did not much matter what particular item happened to turn up on any given day. He did not want to wake his sister sleeping in the next room but one, for she always threw herself into the fray, and the result was an uproar. But he also knew that his father would not let up until he cried out for mercy.

"Oh, father, you're killing me!" he groaned, at last.

At this word, little Lenchen, who was not asleep at all, but had been listening behind the door, burst into the room with a terrific scream, and rushed towards her brother. Herr Hartmann drove her off with a couple of savage cuts across her bare, outstretched arms, and Trudchen pulled her back and held her fast in spite of her struggles and shrieks.

"Please, stop, Uncle!" exclaimed Trudchen. "I'm sure he's had enough. You'll work hard next term, won't you, Hans?"

She started towards him, but little Lenchen broke away again, and had to be rescued.

"Keep out of the way!" warned Herr Hartmann, "or you'll get something to take home with you!"

Even Frau Hartmann, when she ventured to attempt an interference, retired from the fray with a red line across her cheek that admonished her to keep out of the danger-zone.

Hans' fortitude was completely broken down by this time, and he screamed as loudly as his sister, though in another key. The neighbours were accustomed to similar *Skandals* in their own domiciles, and if a chance stranger in the neighbourhood happened to ask for an explanation of the uproar, he was told that it was only the Hartmann children getting *Prügel.*

At last the father's practised arm was thoroughly tired, and he laid the cane on the shelf again.

"You'll not go swimming nor football playing again this term!" he announced, "nor next term either, unless you get into the twenties again."

" You're an old brute ! " exclaimed Trudchen, angered chiefly by the blow her aunt had received ; " I'll never let you kiss me again ! "

He jumped up and started after her, but she beat a hasty retreat, blocking the door behind her with the arm chair, and effected a successful retirement.

The end of this story came some years later, after a long series of similar crises. Hans' rather slow mind had been so mercilessly stuffed with information while he was still a small boy that he had long been suffering from chronic mental dyspepsia, and the further he advanced, the deeper grew the intellectual mud in which he helplessly floundered. Nevertheless, by constant " oxing " and " buffaloing " (Prussian slang for " swatting "), together with the help of private tutors and the stimulation of frequent posterior applications, he managed to fight his way through to the *Einjährigfreiwilliger-exam.* (the " one-year-voluntary-military-service examination), but there he stuck. He failed three times running in this test, which may be compared to a London Matriculation in eight subjects instead of five, and stood, in his twenty-first year, before his fourth trial, which would be his last chance. Another failure in this examination would cut

him out of nearly all the higher occupations. He was too old to be apprenticed to any ordinary trade, and his whole higher education would be lost. He had already missed the chance of a university career, which had been his parents' original ambition. If he failed in this test he would also have to serve for two years with the ordinary rank and file, instead of among the aristocratic one-year " volunteers " who may choose the time of their service between the years of eighteen and twenty-five, and usually take it on the completion of their university courses.

On the morning of the examination, Frau Hartmann went in to waken her son and help him prepare for the ordeal. She found him lying on his bed, fully dressed, stiff and stark and cold.

The physician who was hurriedly summoned sniffed the air suspiciously, and presently found in the young man's clenched hand a small bottle marked " *Cyankalium.*" It had evidently come from the laboratory of the *Gymnasium.*

Just as the police entered the room, Frau Hartmann noticed for the first time a letter lying on the table addressed to her. She picked it up and opened it, but the officer snatched it out of her hand with the words : " *Im Namen des*

Gesetz!" ("In the name of the Law"). So the mother and father could only guess what had driven their only son to so desperate an end; for Prussian Law considers it merciful to suppress all documentary evidence left by suicides and other criminals.

In the year 1913 over fifty Prussian schoolboys, between the ages of twelve and twenty, died by their own hands.

A FORCED ENGAGEMENT.

"I'M going to take you to a party to-morrow night, Fay," announced Curt.

"Yes?" answered Felicitas. "And what kind of a one, pray?"

"Oh, just a little private party. We've taken a room at the Teutonia, and are going to have supper and beer and songs."

"Respectable women don't go to students' parties," objected the girl.

"This is a special occasion. We're all bringing lady friends, and I promised to bring you. Most of them know we're going to be engaged soon. You must wear the dress you wore at the masked ball—the Germania one, you know."

"I couldn't. It's too low. You told me yourself people of our class don't wear such dresses."

"But you must. The fellows won't believe it when I tell them what a figure you cut at the ball, so I promised to bring you in the same dress and show them. You've no idea how proud I am of you, Felicitas!"

"Well, if you say so, I suppose I must. But I shan't stay long to be stared at. You medicos have a little way of staring at one as though you were thinking what a fine specimen one would make on the dissecting table. I shan't be comfortable, I know. I felt chilly and half-dressed the whole night of the masked ball."

"Oh, you'll soon warm up to-morrow night. We have wine for the ladies, and cognac, if you want it."

"I don't believe Mother would like me to go to such a party. I remember Fritz Schnodderjahn tried to get me to go once, and Mother told me not to go on any account."

"When is your mother coming back?"

"The day after to-morrow morning. I think the train gets in from Allenstein at six o'clock."

"Oh, well, then, you'll be safe at home long before that!"

* * * *

As they passed down the corridor of the Teutonia Hotel the next evening, Felicitas heard shouts of noisy laughter from the room at the further end, and drew her shawl more closely about her shoulders.

"Take it off, now," whispered Curt, as they

reached the door, "and burst in upon them in 'all your glory!"

"Please, don't!" she whispered back, as he tried to pull the shawl away from her. "I want to see how the other women are dressed first."

"Oh, you'll not be without company as far as your dress is concerned. Of course, not one of them is half as pretty as you, though. They'll all be green with envy, and their cavaliers as well."

"Very well, then; it's only to please you, you know."

As they entered the room, all eyes were fixed on them, or rather on the girl, for a moment, and then the men rose unanimously to their feet, and shouted in chorus, *Hoch, Germania!* Felicitas blushed deeply, half with shame and half with pleasure. She recognised the faces of a number who had danced with her at the ball, but was too confused to perceive that the scene had evidently been prearranged. Neither did she note the exaggerated, half mocking politeness of the introductory ceremonies.

They were soon seated at the table, and the girl began to feel more comfortable. There were as many ladies in the party as gentlemen, and their costumes justified Curt's prediction that

she would not need to feel conspicuous on account of her dress. They all belonged to that class of women who live by their wits, either as " artistes " (of the music hall variety) or as artists' models.

The conversation centered around " art " in the broadest sense of the term, and at first was lively and piquant without being offensive. Sometimes a whispered joke would cause a local explosion, but it was quickly hushed, and Felicitas soon noticed by the many glances cast in her direction that they looked upon her as a strange bird, whose presence seemed to restrain them.

An hour later they were scattered about the room, chatting, laughing, and singing to the accompaniment of the piano in the corner, and going in couples to the buffet near, where they took turns in serving each other. At first the ladies insisted on drinking a mug of beer each with the students, but afterwards they had light wine, with a cognac now and then. Felicitas was used to beer, but did not know the potent effect of a mixture of beer and wine and spirits, so she began to feel highly exhilarated before the practised drinkers around her settled down to business. She sang songs for them (her voice was excellent) and danced with one of the young men after another until the other ladies, jealous

at first, began to follow her movements with scornful glances, and throw off the unnatural reserve which had been imposed upon them on account of the presence of a student's potential fiancée.

Curt's head was hardly stronger than the girl's, and he drank as cautiously as he could without attracting attention, but semi-intoxication made him morose and apathetic, and he was glad to find a chair back of the piano where he could sit more or less concealed and undisturbed. From his place of refuge he heard a half-whispered conversation between two girls standing on the other side of the piano.

"She's no better than we are," said the one; "she used to run about with Tom, Dick and Harry like the rest of us. Only now she has a little money, and has turned virtuous."

"I wonder where that rascal Curt is," said the other. "He has never settled up with me for the time I went with him to Cranz for a day, the beggarly miser! I wonder what he means by bringing his virgin here? Does he want to get rid of her? I'm not going to play the nun for her any longer. She has danced with every man in the room, and is dressed like a——!"

"Hush!" said the other, in a lower whisper, "Curt's back of the piano!"

"What do I care?"

Then they both broke into a titter.

"I'll give you a *Groschen* to go and sit down on his lap!" said the first.

"Make it a Mark, and I'll do it in front of his bride-to-be's nose!" offered the other.

"Can't afford it!"

"I'll do it any way, just for the fun of it! Thanks for the suggestion!"

She waited until Felicitas, who was waltzing round the room in the arms of Hans Rüppel, was directly opposite, and then carried out her threat. When Curt pushed her rudely away, she turned round with a mocking laugh.

"Oh, I'm sorry! I thought it was someone else!" And she sailed out into the middle of the room, doing a ballet dance as well as her skirts would permit.

Curt walked over to the buffet, and drank a cognac. This was really against the rules, for students should only drink beer, but he was trying to make up his mind to go home early, in which case there was little to prevent his drinking more freely, and he liked cognac better than beer.

On his way back he met Hans with Felicitas on his arm.

"I say, Curt!" said Hans, "what'll you take to swap girls for the night?"

Curt frowned savagely at him.

"Oh! Beg pardon! I forgot! But I saw you with Marie in the corner just now, and thought perhaps it was all up."

"Marie's an insolent, shameless minx!" declared Curt.

"Agreed!" exclaimed the other, "but if you want your Fraülein Felicitas so badly you'd better look after her!"

He gave the girl on his arm a gentle push towards Curt, and left them abruptly.

Felicitas took Curt's arm so hastily, and hung so heavily, that he saw she could hardly stand.

"Are you having a good time?" he asked.

"Yes; but I think I'd better go home now, I feel so giddy, and my head's very queer. I must have danced too hard."

There was a sudden break in the music, and they both heard someone say, "If you don't behave yourself until Curt's chicken goes, I'll pinch your ear!"

"What does he mean?" asked Felicitas, when the general titter subsided.

"Never mind! Come and have some wine. No, I'll bring you some. Sit here."

As he stood at the buffet, Hans Rüppel came up and whispered to him in drastic *Platt* German: "You're a beast to bring that child here! If you're not a dirty cad, you'll take her off at once, and for God's sake don't give her any more wine! She's not used to it. You don't want to take her home to her mother dead drunk? You'll have a job to get her into a taxi now. You're none too steady yourself!"

"Do you want to fight?" asked Curt.

"I don't mind, if you want to get your nose slit up for not looking after your own betrothed!"

"We're not engaged yet, you know," answered Curt.

"The more shame to you!"

Hans Rüppel left him, and went over to Fritz Haussler, an old friend of Curt's.

"Get Curt to take his girl home!" said Hans.

"None of my business! If he's fool enough to bring her here, how can I help it? After all, her mother is, or was, a charwoman."

"She may be respectable for all that."

"Depends on what you call respectability. I fancy he wants to get rid of her."

"More fool he. She's worth twenty of him."

"And has a pot of brass, too. But then her mother was a charwoman."

"And his father's a luggage porter! So what's he got to grumble about? The University is not what it was once. Everybody gets into it. And such muddle-headed plebeians as Curt Meyer come blundering into our cosiest parties and spoil all the fun. I suppose he'll bring his mother next time!"

Hans turned away. Why should he take the trouble to "decorate Curt Meyer's front window" (*sein Schaufenster schmücken*) for the sake of a girl whose mother was a charwoman?

Meanwhile Curt had mixed a glass of wine and cognac and forced Felicitas to swallow the burning liquid, although it nearly choked her.

Fritz went back to Marie.

"I wonder if Curt would mind," remarked the girl, "if I went over and kissed his dear little baby?"

"Better try it!"

"I would if I thought she'd go. What does the silly goose mean by coming to show off her shoulders to *this* crowd? And you all act as if she was an angel from heaven!"

"Well, she's clearly different from the most of you. You could take three times the wine

she's had, for example, without turning a hair, and she's half gone already."

"The sooner she's all gone the better. Curt has just given her another dose. This is the stupidest party we've had this year. If she doesn't go soon, I'll swear off, and marry a shoemaker's apprentice!"

"You'll just be jolly glad to find one that would have you, wouldn't you?"

The girl gave him a slap, and walked over to Curt.

"Do take the pudding-faced darling home!" she whispered into his ear. "She's moderately safe on her feet, yet. In an hour she'll be as heavy as a stone, and you're already a bit top-heavy yourself. Take the infant home and put it to bed!"

Curt decided to follow this well-meant avdice. Five minutes later he had Felicitas in a taxi-cab. He had to hold her in his arms to keep her from slipping to the floor.

Arrived at her door, he took her purse from the pocket of her cloak, paid for the taxi, and carried her up the three flights of stairs to her mother's flat. The cold night air revived her a little, and she tried to dismiss him at the door, but he knew her mother was away, and carried her through

one room after another, in spite of her feeble struggles, until he found a bed to lay her out on.

Then the deadly stupor overpowered her again, and she heeded not the slipping of her dress from her shoulders, nor felt the hot kisses raining on her neck and bosom. But the first touch of burning lips beyond the limits of the conventional decolletage went through her like an electric shock, and she sprang up with a ringing shriek.

"*Donnerwetter!*" exclaimed Curt, "you'll have the whole house down upon us!"

"Help me to get back to the door!" she commanded.

Curt was frightened now, and obeyed. The door was still open. She balanced herself against the wall in the narrow corridor.

"Now go!" she said, pointing the way with an arm that gleamed white even in the inky darkness. Curt thought it was raised to strike him, and slunk out. The girl slammed the door after him, and fell headlong.

* * * *

Old Frau Junker, coming home at six o'clock the next morning, had a bad half hour. She found her daughter lying half naked on the floor, her head in the centre of a filthy pool of sour beer, etc.,

etc., which a much-abused stomach had rejected during the night.

A vigorous application of cold water, however, soon brought the girl around, when she was able to assure her mother that nothing serious had happened. During the course of the day Frau Junker called on Frau Meyer for the first time. The interview was long and stormy, and for the most part unprintable. By stoutly threatening to sue Curt for assault, Frau Junker finally persuaded Frau Meyer to consent to a formal engagement. The legal penalty for such a peccadillo as Curt had committed was indeed small, but there was ground for alleging conspiracy, and that would mean Curt's expulsion from his students' corps, if not from the university itself. The date for the engagement ceremony was fixed, and as Frau Junker's flat was very small, and her husband dead, Frau Meyer had to agree to act as hostess, and her husband to make the formal announcement.

Engagements are sometimes broken in East Prussia, but a formal, open betrothal is a much more serious matter than in England. It secures the young people the greatest liberty of intercourse, free from any jealous chaperoning. They may go together everywhere, and are expected to

love and fondle each other in private and public. Thus marriages are often long delayed when the betrothed couple are living in the same place, and the wedding often marks the end rather than the beginning of the Prussian Romance.

If an "accident" happens after the announcement of the betrothal, public opinion compels the couple to marry at once, whether their preparations be complete or not. The only outward difference is that, while the bride ordinarily wears a complete circlet of myrtle at the wedding ceremony, in such cases she goes to the altar with the wreath broken behind in public token of her frailty.* Naturally, there is always some talk, but no permanent stigma of disgrace results from this experience, which occurs too often to excite very much reprehension.

On the appointed day great preparations were made at the Meyers. The front room boarder was persuaded to waive his rights for the day in consideration of being one of the invited guests. A hired piano came laboriously up the three flights of stairs and round the narrow corners, not without much sweating and swearing. Three enormous cakes, half as large as the top of the

* This custom has of late years fallen into disuse in the larger cities.

dining-table, and containing incredible scores of eggs, were stirred up in the little kitchen, and sent off to the baker's oven round the corner, together with two great geese and a mighty joint. Every half hour the door bell jingled furiously to announce the arrival of cases of beer, or wine, or *Schnaps*, or boxes of cigars, tins of sardines, pickled eels, confectionery, sausage, or some other delicacy. Frau Meyer never gave parties save on special occasions, but when she once committed herself to a thing, she did it thoroughly, whether it was a supper she gave or a thrashing. On this occasion there were perhaps a dozen guests, mostly near relatives, save for two or three of Curt's student friends; yet the supper cost at least £25.

At three o'clock they began to arrive. Curt and Felicitas, who by mutual consent had not seen each other during the interval since the Teutonia party, met without shame or embarrassment. The fact that they were both intoxicated at the time was accepted as ample explanation. The girl's only remark was, "You won't get me into such a fix again!"

And Curt merely laughed.

As soon as all the guests had arrived, coffee and cake were served, and then there was an

interval of an hour or so for gossip and chat, while the supper proper was being prepared. Everyone present knew what the object of the party was, but no one referred to it. Curt and Felicitas sat in a corner by themselves, conversing in low whispers, and no one disturbed them.

While the guests chatted, Frau Meyer and her daughters decorated the two tables which had been placed together in the front room, and piled up the sideboard with the various *Delicatessen* that formed the dessert. The table linen was spotless, but the service simple and plain. The Prussian prefers an abundance of good food on a single plate to meagre samples of half a dozen delicacies scattered about him. Each guest was provided with a large plate and a small plate only, and a single knife, fork and spoon. They believed in eating food, not playing with it.

Curt and Felicitas sat together at the head of the table, Herr and Frau Meyer being located opposite each other about half way down. The gentlemen stuck the edges of their serviettes into their collars, as if in preparation for a shave, thus turning them into most effective "bibs." The ladies, having no collars, followed the usual civilised custom. Frau Meyer did all the carving, her husband helped to serve the "trimmings,"

while Gretchen and Trudchen passed the loaded plates to the guests, not forgetting themselves. The first and chief course consisted of fish, fowl, meat, and potatoes, with sauce and a spoonful of *Kompott* (black-currant jam) all served on the same plate, save the last item, which occupied a tiny saucer of its own. There was a liberal second helping for those who desired it. This course was washed down with beer.

After the girls had cleared away the large plates, the various kinds of dessert began to circulate around the table. Ample justice was done to the sandwiches, the sausage, and the sweets; the pickled eel and the smoked salmon, the French liqueur bon-bons and the Russian caviare. Then came the final treat of the evening. Gretchen brought in a large tray of tinkling glasses, and Trudchen staggered under her load of champagne bottles. The students drew the corks with a facility that betrayed constant practice; a bottle of wine and a glass were placed before each guest; the glasses solemnly filled; and then a great silence settled over the scene.

Herr Meyer pushed back his chair and rose to his feet, not without difficulty, clearing his throat with great perseverance. At last he began:

"*Meine Damen und meine Herren!* You are

doubtless aware of the nature of the occasion which has brought us here this evening. When my son Curt successfully passed his *Abiturienten-exam* at the Gymnasium and came to me with the proposition that he should study medicine, the first condition I laid down was that he should resolutely steer clear of all affairs of heart until he had finished. You know, ladies and gentlemen, that I am a poor man (he brushed a tear from his blood-shot eye), and have to work hard for my living, even now in my old age; and I knew it would be a hard struggle for me to meet even the minimum expense of giving my son a university education; and Cupid, although he is blind, always charges the full price for his silver arrows. So Curt promised faithfully to give the treacherous god a wide berth, and keep out of mischief until he could call himself a Doctor of Medicine. But, ladies and gentlemen, you all know what an artful little god it is, and how many wiles it has to get its arrows through the thickest armour. Well, you see the result there at the head of the table! A few weeks ago, without any warning, that young rascal came up to me with a girl on his arm and told me they had promised to marry each other! Naturally I was considerably annoyed at this unheard-of piece of impudence,

but when I took a second look at the girl—there she is, ladies and gentlemen, you can look at her for yourselves!—my heart melted within me, and, remembering my own youth, and how I worshipped every dimple of my Anna's face—(they were dimples then, ladies and gentlemen, not wrinkles)—when I saw the girl's lovely face, I could not blame the young scapegrace for making a fool of himself. And now, since he had broken one set of promises, he offered me another instead, telling me that they were just as good as the former ones had been! What could I do but accept them, ladies and gentlemen, and hope that they would be kept at least as well as the others? So they have had their own way, and there they are, expecting us to take them seriously, and allow them to plan their own lives according to their own particular whims. What can a poor old father do, but wish them all happiness and God's blessing, and drink a humble glass to their health and prosperity?"

Instantly the student-guests were on their feet shouting, "*Es lebe das Brautpaar, es lebe hoch!*" and the other guests followed their example. Then came the friendly, pushing rivalry as each one pressed towards the end of the table to clink glasses with the smiling *Braut*

and the grinning *Braütigam.* There were a few other speeches and toasts, but custom did not demand that Curt should respond unless he cared to, so presently the tables were cleared and carried out, most of the chairs shoved into the bedroom, and the music and dancing began. The refreshments and tit-bits remained on the sideboard, a case of good cigars was opened, and all was good cheer and conviviality. At eleven o'clock coffee and cake was served again, and then the guests began to depart.

Next day the morning paper contained the following notice :

" Herr Obergepäckträger Gottfried Meyer and wife Anna, of 32 Georgstr., beg to announce the betrothal of their son, Curt, to Fraülein Felicitas Junker, of 17 Winkelgasse."

GRETCHEN'S ROMANCE.

"GRETCHEN!" said Trudchen, "you can't guess whom I met in the street to-day."

The two girls sat in the dining-room, working at their daily quota of umbrellas. Trudchen, the quicker of the two, had already finished hers, but Gretchen was still driving away at her machine.

"Don't bother me!" she replied.

"But I know you'd like to know!" insisted the younger sister.

"Well, why don't you tell me, then?"

"It was a young man," began Trudchen, mysteriously, "and he has brown eyes and brown curly hair, and such a dear little silky brown moustache, not a bit like the stiff bristles most of the young fellows wear. Oh, it must be lovely," —Trudchen folded her hands ecstatically, and rolled her eyes towards the ceiling—"it must be lovely"—she lowered her voice almost to a whisper—"to have a kiss from a man with such a moustache!"

"Shut up!" ordered Gretchen, but her cheeks were flaming red. Trudchen burst into an uncontrollable giggle.

"He took my hand," continued Trudchen, as soon as she could master her hysterics, "and I took his! And I looked into his wonderful brown eyes, and he looked into mine. And he pressed my hand, just a little, so"—she tried to get hold of her sister's busy fingers and press them by way of illustration, but got only a smart slap for her trouble.

"If you're going to be nasty, I won't tell you any more!" declared Trudchen.

"I know the rest," replied Gretchen, "you turned as red as a beet as soon as he looked at you, and started to giggle!"

"No!" said Trudchen, quite serious again, "his soulful glance held me so in thrall that I couldn't have laughed if he'd have tickled me; which, of course, he didn't, for he's much too fine a gentleman for that. As I was going to tell you before, he pressed my hand, ever so gently, and oh! it was heavenly! I had to look down at the ground to keep my heart from bursting. And then he put his fawn-coloured gloved finger under my chin and made me hold up my face again, and——"

"If you don't dry up I'll throw this water all over you!" threatened Gretchen, getting up from her chair and going into the kitchen.

"But you haven't let me tell you yet what he said to me," said Trudchen.

"Well, hurry up, then! I'm tired of your silly nonsense."

"So! You *do* want to hear, don't you? Well you'll just have to wait till I get ready to tell you. I don't believe I'll tell you at all, now!"

This threat brought Gretchen to her knees.

"Dear, good Trudchen!" she pleaded, "why must you always plague me so?"

"I knew he had something to say to me," continued Trudchen, mollified by this unconditional surrender, "and when he kept on holding my hand, and looking into my eyes, and smiling so angelically, I knew it must be something important. I thought he was going to tell me how sweet I looked in my new blouse——"

A quick jump saved her from a half-cupful of water that came flying in from the kitchen. She could ignore the attack as unsuccessful, but was admonished thereby to come to the point.

"And he asked me," she went on, lowering her voice again to the mysterious stage whisper,

" and he asked me—if my Fraülein sister would be at home this afternoon ! "

" This afternoon ? Why didn't you tell me, you little minx ? He may be here any minute, and I've nothing on ! "

Frau Meyer had warned them to put on at least a blouse while she was gone, in case there might be a chance caller, but they always felt uncomfortable in formal " clothes," so they had been working, as usual, in their petticoats and camisoles.

" You must finish my umbrellas while I dress ! " declared Gretchen. Trudchen good-naturedly consented to this proposition, and sat down to the machine. In ten minutes she had finished, and went to " help " Gretchen with her toilette.

" He didn't say he was coming ! " she began, encouragingly.

" Then why should he ask if I was at home ? "

" Perhaps he only means to send you something."

" Did you tell him Mother might be out ? "

" No. Then he surely wouldn't have come. Gretchen ! " she went on, after a pause, " do you think he'll propose this afternoon ? "

" *Du ärgerst mich rein tod !* " (you plague me

clean to death), exclaimed the elder sister. "You haven't any sense of propriety!"

"Gretchen!" began the irrepressible again, "are you really ready to be married? Do you know how many things you have?"

Gretchen took this question seriously. She had not counted them of late. Perhaps he would ask her about it! She stopped in the middle of her dressing and went into the front room to take an inventory. Trudchen followed her with mocking laughter.

"You must let me help," she declared, "or you won't get through before he comes!"

The two girls took out of the great clothes cupboard one pile of snowy linen after another, and the counting began.

"You must take the chemises first," said Trudchen, "he'll be sure to ask you how many chemises you have!"

"Thirty-two!" announced Gretchen, without seeing the point of the joke. Trudchen lay down on the floor in an uncontrollable fit, while Gretchen continued her work. Forty-eight towels, sixty serviettes, twelve table-cloths, twenty-four night-jackets, four proper night-dresses for state occasions. (Prussian girls commonly sleep in a chemise, and put on a short, white jacket over it

in cold weather), twenty-four sheets, twelve feather-bed covers (most Prussians sleep under feathers the year round), thirty-six pillow-cases, four elaborately embroidered table-covers, and proportionate numbers of various kinds of underwear, handkerchiefs, d'oyleys, etc., etc. This store was the result of ten years of economy and patient labour, for every piece had Gretchen's initials worked into it with her own hands; every chemise and camisole and pillow-case was edged and decorated with lace or other trimming of her own manufacture. And this was only half of her treasure. The other half, consisting of two thousand five hundred marks (£125), was in the savings-bank, and would be used to buy furniture for her house. The Prussian bride plans to have laundry to last at least for fifteen years after the marriage. By that time she can reasonably hope that her husband's income will have reached a point that will enable her to purchase more.

But Gretchen was not quite satisfied with her outfit. She turned to her sister, who had now recovered again.

"Trudchen!" she began. "If——if——"

"If what?" demanded Trudchen.

"If——if it should happen before Christmas,

you will give me two of your embroidered table-covers, won't you, Trudchen, dear? You'll have time to make yourself some more later on."

Now a crocheted or embroidered table-cover means a few dozen hours of patient, nerve-trying labour, and Trudchen changed the subject.

"Do you think he wants you as badly as that?" she laughed.

"He's twenty-eight," replied Gretchen, seriously, "and is getting fifteen pounds a month at the bank. Why should we wait?"

"Gretchen, Gretchen!" admonished the other, "you have always been such a proper, modest, timid girl! Who'd have thought you'd be in such a hurry? So you have it all fixed up, I see!"

Gretchen was saved from further betraying herself by a sharp ring at the door. Both the girls jumped up and ran into the kitchen.

"You must go," commanded Gretchen. "I'll be ready in half a minute."

The elder sister's hair was still down, so Trudchen thrust her arms into the sleeves of her wide "overall," and, without waiting to fasten it behind, went to the door. It was the expected visitor, in a shining silk hat, frock coat, fancy vest, and patent leather boots. In his hand was

a large bouquet of red roses. Evidently he meant business.

Trudchen gasped at the splendid vision, and lost all self-control or sense of what she ought to do.

"Mother's out!" was all she could say.

"I've brought these flowers for your sister," said the young man, since she did not invite him to enter.

Trudchen took them, and backed carefully into the kitchen.

"Gretchen! Gretchen!" she whispered, excitedly, dancing into the bedroom as soon as she was safely around the corner out of the visitor's sight, "He's going to propose! He's all dressed up, top hat and all the rest of it, and see! Here's a big bouquet of red roses."

"Where did you take him?"

"Oh, I forgot to ask him in. Perhaps he's gone away!"

Gretchen rose up in holy wrath.

"Take him into the parlour at once, and entertain him until I get ready, or I'll box your ears!"

"How can I? I've only got my apron on, and that's all open behind, and hasn't any collar. I had to back out of the corridor like a coal van

getting up to the cellar window when I brought your flowers."

"You *must* go! Come here; I'll fasten you up. You can tie this ribbon around your neck; only be quick!"

"But he'll see I haven't any blouse on!"

"*Trudchen!!* If he goes away I'll never forgive you! It'll break my heart! He'll never come again, and it'll be all your fault!"

"I'll go and see if he's still there," said Trudchen, somewhat chastened by the possibility of such a catastrophe.

She peered cautiously around the corner into the corridor, but the young man, standing in the shadow, easily saw her first, and the broad smile on his face when she finally caught sight of it set her off into another spasm.

Gretchen's coiffure was far from perfection, and a dozen other little things about her dress needed touching up, but she saw that Trudchen was helpless, and she would have to face her would-be lover as she was, or run the chance of losing him altogether.

"Make some coffee," she commanded; "but before you bring it in heat up a flat-iron and iron out your face!"

With a parting glance of annihilating scorn, she rustled into the corridor.

Luckily the front room boarder was out, so she could conduct her caller into the parlour.

"Mother's out!" announced Gretchen, when the state of the weather had been settled.

"So your Fraülein sister told me."

"But she'll soon be back."

"Perhaps it's just as well that I have the opportunity of a word with you before she comes."

The young man was not in the least embarrassed. He knew the parents would put nothing in the way of his wishes, and the girl, unless she had previous attachments, would hardly refuse such a good "partie," whatever the state of her heart. He knew, furthermore, from various trivial encounters with Gretchen, that from this standpoint also she was not indifferent to him. He had danced with her several times at the last ball, and she had refused other applicants in order to dance again with him.

"Fraülein Gretchen," he continued, "you can easily imagine for what purpose I have called this afternoon. Is it too much to ask you, after the favour you have shown me, if I may tell your parents that you do not object to my attentions?"

Gretchen looked down at her hands, and blushed in silence. She did not expect him to fall on his knees before her, but she had some idea of playing the game.

The young man came over to her, and took one of her hands in his. She let it rest there a few seconds, and then withdrew it. The hands were quite clean, but the nails not entirely up to her ideal. She folded one hand into the other so as to hide the finger-ends.

"You must ask Papa first!" she said, without looking at him. Then she rose rather hastily, and went over to the window which overlooked the street fifty feet below.

"Mother's coming," she announced.

The young man joined her.

"I've never met your mother," he remarked. "I suppose I can hardly expect her to take a fancy to me."

Gretchen laughed. Prussian mothers-in-law have a worse reputation even than English.

"Who's here?" were Frau Meyer's first words as she came puffing up the last flight of stairs. Trudchen stood at the open door, and the mother had already scented the coffee.

"It's Herr Bodenbinder!" whispered Trudchen. "He's in the parlour with Gretchen."

"Has she got a dress on?"

"Yes; I had to entertain him in my apron while she fixed herself up!"

Frau Meyer bustled concernedly into the parlour without removing her street costume. She herself had no proper "dress" on beneath her cape. Gretchen introduced her friend, who bowed over the old woman's gnarled hand as if she had been a duchess.

Frau Meyer inspected him from head to foot, and her stern features softened as she took in the altogether satisfactory details. He was sufficiently good-looking, neither too large nor too small, and his complete ceremonial outfit showed that he was making his advances in proper form. He was the first-fruits of her carefully-planned three-years' advertising campaign, and as such his appearance was highly gratifying. She felt she could safely leave Gretchen with him; so, after telling him that her husband would soon be home for his supper, she went into the bedroom to put on her black alpaca dress.

Trudchen was despatched to fetch her father, and she flew towards the station with a speed that should have atoned for her failure earlier in the afternoon. Herr Meyer made hasty arrangements for a substitute, fortified himself

strongly at a *Schnapsbude* on the way home, and arrived in a suitable state of mild benevolence to welcome his future son-in-law.

The interview between the two men was short and satisfactory. Herr Bodenbinder, as a bank clerk with £15 a month, was not quite as good a "partie" as a Post Office or Customs-house official with a similar salary, for the pension arrangements in Government offices were more stable; but he was in one of the largest banks, and might with diligence work his way considerably further up the ladder. Gretchen's marriage portion, moreover, was very modest, and there was the additional advantage that Herr Bodenbinder wished to marry at once, and already had some furniture which had been left him by his parents.

"I suppose you've already ascertained Gretchen's feelings towards your proposition?" asked Herr Meyer; "young people now-a-days generally fix things up themselves before they go to the parents about it."

"Well," admitted the young man, "your daughter has certainly given me some tokens of her favour, but I am bound to say that she refused to answer any direct proposal before I consulted you."

"Well, then, we must call her in and see what she says. Gretchen!"

The girl came in and stood at the door.

"This young fellow imagines you've taken a fancy to him!" said her father.

Gretchen ran up to him, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed his rough, unshaven cheek.

"Well, then," said the father, disengaging himself gently from her embrace, "if that's what you think about it, give him a kiss, like a good girl, and be as happy as you can!"

The young man did not wait for her to obey this parental command, but took her out of her father's arms.

As he looked over her shoulder through the door into the bedroom which she had left open, he caught sight of Trudchen's laughing face in the mirror of the commode. He moved out of that mischievous line of fire, and the two were presently sitting together on the sofa, too happy as yet to begin to plan for the future. Frau Meyer perceived that she would soon have to get another roll of hundred Mark notes out of her private store for the *Verlobungs-fest*, but in this case she had the satisfaction of feeling that the money was well spent.

The engagement ran a perfectly normal course.

Trudchen's innocent mischief gave the necessary spice. She could hardly wait, on that first evening, until Herr Bodenbinder had gone.

"Gretchen!" she began, "I'm *sure* you've let him kiss you before. You held up your face to him so naturally!"

"What do *you* know about it?" demanded the elder sister.

"Oh, I saw the whole thing! You left the bedroom door open, and I saw it in the mirror; and he saw *me* too, and pushed you out of the way! And I'm *sure* you kissed him before he kissed you."

"Papa told me to!" replied Gretchen.

It took poor Trudchen at least five minutes to recover from this frank confession.

A few days later she reverted to the fascinating subject of kissing from another point of view.

"Gretchen! Would you mind it very much—if he should kiss me, just once? I can't imagine just how it would feel, but I know it must be lovely! He has such a perfectly cunning soft little moustache! Would you mind it, Gretchen? Just once?"

"Why should I care? But I'm not going to tell him to kiss you!"

"Oh, I'll manage that! But you really wouldn't mind?"

"Will you give me one of your embroidered table-covers if I don't object?"

The price was a heavy one, but Trudchen intended to sacrifice at least two of her table-cloths in any case, and it was just as well to get something for them. So the bargain was completed.

The next time Herr Bodenbinder came for supper she slipped a teaspoon down the back of his neck. She knew from experience how young men, and older ones also, usually avenged themselves on *Backfisch* (*Backfisch* is the Prussian word for "Flapper," only in Prussia they don't flap). Herr Bodenbinder took the first attack coolly, and the second, but when, on sitting down to the table, she moved his chair at the critical instant, so that he descended on one corner of it and narrowly escaped complete precipitation upon the floor, his patience was exhausted.

"Behave, Trudchen!" he exclaimed, "or I'll kiss you!"

"You daren't!" she challenged.

"Oh!" he replied, getting up from his chair. And the chase began. Three times they ran round the little circle of rooms, through the kitchen, the corridor, the parlour, the bedroom, the dining-room, and into the kitchen again.

Trudchen let herself get caught in the darkest corner of the bedroom.

Half-a-minute later they came to light again, flushed, laughing, and dishevelled. Trudchen sat down by her sister.

"It's a shameful cheat!" she whispered into Gretchen's ear. "He kissed me everywhere but in the right place. I waited as long as I dared, but he just wouldn't kiss my mouth!"

"I hope you'll have better luck next time!" said Gretchen.

KEIN' SORGE UM DEN WEG

("Where there's a will, there's a way.")

"WHOM do you suppose we saw to-day in the café?" asked Trudchen of her mother as the two sisters returned home from drawing their earnings for the month. It was their one dissipation to spend half an hour in some good *Conditorei* over chocolate with whipped cream and pastries on the monthly pay-day. Frau Meyer did not object to this treat, since it only cost a shilling each, and they always turned over the balance faithfully to her without question.

"It was Karl Piotrowski," continued Trudchen, "and he had a friend with him. They came over to our table as soon as they saw us, and lifted their hats and bowed, and were as polite as if we were real ladies. They didn't offer to treat us, which was, of course, quite respectful, and Karlchen asked if we couldn't make up a little party to go to Arnau some fine Sunday afternoon. He said, of course, you would come too, Mother, and

was just as nice about it as he could be. Of course, Gretchen was thinking of her sheep-eyed Heinzchen, and didn't say much, but I told them we'd be glad to go, and thanked them for their kindness."

The young man's father had once been their landlord, living in the fashionable first floor of the same house in which the Meyers occupied the basement; so the girls had as small children often played with Karl Piotrowski. The father, however, had gone into the fishing trade, succeeded brilliantly, as Polish Jews often succeed when they get out of their native land, and now occupied a whole house of his own at Danzig, where his business was located. His son, after a brilliant career at the Gymnasium, had allowed his father to persuade him to study medicine, although his own tastes lay in a different direction, and he was now within a year of his *Doktor-examen.*

Of course, he was too high game for the Meyer girls to think of stalking, nevertheless it might help them to be seen in his company, under proper restrictions, as an old friend, so Frau Meyer did not frown on the liberty Trudchen had taken. She remembered "Karlchen" as a quiet, handsome, considerate boy, who had always treated

her little girls with the greatest respect and gallantry, although he could not get along with Curt; and from Trudchen's report she judged that he had taken no unjustifiable liberty with them.

One Sunday, several weeks later, Herr Meyer came home for his dinner in a savage mood. Before he had been in the house five minutes the girls both had their ears boxed for giggling, and had retired into the front room to sulk. Herr Meyer often suffered from such attacks when his turn came to work on Sunday, and to-day he had met his old enemy the Tax-collector, and got the worst of a lively round. When the girls came back for dinner (which no sulking ever interfered with), he forbade them to go anywhere that afternoon, or dress up at all. He was sure Herr Pfennigfinder would be on the war-path to catch the proletariat in all its finery.

In the midst of the meal, the door bell rang, and Trudchen ran to answer the call. It was Karl Piotrowski.

"I won't keep you half-a-minute, Trudchen," he said, "but the weather's so perfectly glorious to-day I was sure you would like to come with my friend and me to Arnau this afternoon, so I've just called in passing to ask you to be ready

by one o'clock. There's a steamer at one-thirty, and one of the bands from the garrison is going to be there, so there'll be dancing in the evening. Of course, you'll come? And your Frau Mother, too? Then you won't have to come back so early."

"Yes, we'll be ready," agreed Trudchen; "and thanks ever so much for inviting us!"

"The pleasure is all mine!" said the young man, gallantly, "it will be no end of fun. Don't forget, one o'clock, sharp!"

"We'll be ready!" Trudchen assured him. *Aufwiedersehen*!

"Who was it?" demanded Herr Meyer, as she returned to the table.

"Only an old pedlar with a bundle of brooms to sell," replied Trudchen.

"On Sunday? The police ought to stop such things. Why did you jabber with him so long?"

"I couldn't get rid of him," replied Trudchen; "he said he had a wife and eleven children."

"More fool he!" exclaimed the father.

"We might have given him a *Groschen*," put in Frau Meyer. The Meyers never went to church, but Frau Meyer's father had been a pious man, and she tried to make up for the family's laxity by a little quiet charity now and then.

"I had to slam the door in his face," said Trudchen, to cap her story off properly.

"I wonder if he's gone yet," pondered the mother. She went to the door to see.

He had.

At half past twelve Herr Meyer went back to the station, and Trudchen pulled her cards out of her sleeve. Frau Meyer had no fear that Herr Pfennigfinder would be in Arnau, one of the smallest, yet most delightful, of the many resorts about Königsberg; and as Trudchen had definitely committed them, she raised no serious objections.

Then there was a hurrying and a scurrying; a pulling off of old clothes and a taking down of white dresses and hats and shoes and gloves; a reciprocal examination of necks and ears and elbows to see what scrubbing was absolutely essential; a relentless driving of combs through tangled hair; a tying of ribbons, an impatient hooking up of bodices (still at the back in those days), and a careful inspection to discover if anything could be seen through the semi-transparent summer frocks which a young man could not be expected to look upon with pleasure.

But at one o'clock the girls stood ready, perfect pictures in pink and white, and it only remained for the mother, in her less festive black alpaca,

to run round to the station with a note to Herr Meyer telling him to get his supper in some eating-house that night. The young men, who arrived promptly enough, were both anxious to do this little errand, but Frau Meyer knew that would never do. The girls were strictly forbidden to show themselves at the station save in the plainest clothes, and the mother was so afraid of rousing his wrath that she was glad to give her note to one of her husband's colleagues outside the station, and then hurry away.

Arnau lies only a few miles up the Pregel from Königsberg, and the river steamers, running every half-hour on Sunday afternoon, cover the distance in forty-five minutes. There is only one restaurant, but connected with it is a good dancing pavilion, sometimes used for concerts also. Many of the elite of the city go to Arnau for a quiet afternoon, away from the vulgar crowds at Cranz and Pillau, and the uncomfortable press in the *Tiergarten*.

The party spent a most pleasant afternoon. Frau Meyer allowed the young men, who, she knew, had plenty of money, to act as hosts. Gretchen, indeed, was rather quiet, for her *Braütigam* had been away for some weeks on business, but Trudchen laughed and joked and sang snatches of song (she had for years been the soloist of her

class at school), called the young medical student "Karlchen," to his infinite delight, told the story of Gretchen's engagement with a hundred mischievous embellishments of her own, related her own unsuccessful attempt to get a kiss on the right spot (the young men both professed a willingness to oblige), and acted the innocent, irrepressible, irresponsible *Backfisch* to perfection. After supper there was dancing in the pavilion, and although the girls had plenty of offers from other cavaliers, they stuck loyally to their two friends, for the most part, until Frau Meyer announced that it was time to go.

A steamer ride on a quiet river in the moonlight is a most delightful close to a day of outdoor festivity. The evening was so still and calm, and the air so warm, that the captain of the little boat, at his passengers' request, allowed it to drift gently down the current. No one was in any hurry to get back to the glare and jangle of the city. Trudchen and Gretchen sat together at the back of the ship, with the young men on either side. The mother kept near enough to overhear what was going on without interfering in any way with their innocent fun.

There was a little orchestra on board which struck up now and then, without seriously

hindering the enjoyment of the passengers; and in one of the pauses between its efforts Karl urged Trudchen to sing something.

"Sing the *Burenlied*," he said. "I remember how my mother used to cry when you sang it out in the courtyard."

The mention of his dead mother furnished just that touch of emotion which was necessary to give Trudchen's voice its most plaintive *Klang*. Five years before, when Prussian sympathies, strangely enough, went so strongly in favour of the little nation that was fighting so desperately for "Freedom and Right," the *Burenlied* enjoyed an immense vogue, and the common people had not forgotten it. A genuine Boer, with a fine tenor voice, had sung it in the largest theatre in Königsberg, with *Kolossal* effect, and Frau Meyer's girls had picked it up and never forgotten it.

"I'll try," assented Trudchen, "if Gretchen will sing with me." They had often sung in unison, and although Trudchen's voice was the strongest and best, Gretchen could follow her so perfectly that her softer tones seemed only to improve the timbre of her sister's more brilliant effort, and smooth out some of the faults of an untrained voice, without betraying that the production was not really a solo.

At the next pause in the band music, Karl nudged Trudchen's elbow, and she began. She had not sung three notes before absolute stillness settled down upon the little steamer. The sense of singing together gave the girls perfect confidence, and they had mastered the trick of taking very high notes with complete freedom from any constriction of voice. They went on through verse after verse, and little knots of people on the shore began to follow the slowly drifting boat, while passing cyclists dismounted to hear more of the wonderful music. When they finished the last *Freiheit und Recht* on a note somewhere near B flat, held out to the utmost limit of Trudchen's deep lungs, there was a burst of applause that threatened to sink the ship.

"Bravo!" "Hurrah!" "Encore!" echoed from water and land. Those who could get near enough to the wonderful singers filled their ears with the most flattering superlatives. Karl and his friend were quite submerged by the oncoming tide of insistent admirers, and the poor little orchestra was silenced for the night. They had to sing again and again, *Die Wacht am Rhein*, *O, Tannenbaum*, *Die Lorelei*, *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz*, and then once again the wonderful *Burenlied* to finish up with as the lights of

Königsberg came into view, and the distant "Ding, ding," of a suburban tram-car broke in jarringly on the peace of the night. The captain of the boat made his way down to them, thanked them heartily for the evening's entertainment, and wrote them out a free pass for the rest of the season, urging them to visit Arnau as often as they could.

Karl Piotrowski was greatly impressed by the ovation, which went far beyond his highest expectation. It was quite a new experience for the young aristocrat to have to shine in the light borrowed from a couple of girls, and he conducted them home with chastened deference and politeness. And when, a few weeks later, while walking in the *Tiergarten* with Graf Lövenstein, he caught sight of the Meyer family sitting at one of the tables, he did not hesitate to take the young nobleman over to them, introduce him to the whole family, including Herr Bodenbinder, and spend a whole hour at their table, discussing chiefly the triumph on the river.

But when, a few days later, he called alone and brought flowers for Trudchen, Frau Meyer thought it time to interfere. She sent the girls out of the parlour, and had a "quiet word" with him.

"Herr Piotrowski," she said, "I know you mean it all right, and you've acted like a perfect gentleman in every way; but I think you'd better not call again. Gretchen, of course, is engaged, but Trudchen is still a silly girl. I know you don't mean anything, and wouldn't try to tamper with her, but I don't want her to get her head turned with any foolish notions. So please don't call any more. You know yourself that something unfortunate might happen."

"But, Frau Meyer," protested the young man, "you misunderstand me completely. I assure you I have taken more than a passing friendly interest in Trudchen. She is a splendid girl, fit for anyone, and you do her and me injustice to imagine that I am not in earnest in my attentions to her. I have only been waiting for her feelings to develop a little further, and then I definitely planned to come to you and Herr Meyer and apply for your permission in proper form."

"Have you asked your father for permission to court the daughter of a railway porter?" asked Frau Meyer, with just a trace of sarcasm. She was beginning to doubt the young man's sincerity for the first time.

"No, but my father is a sensible man, and he knows you're respectable people. And then,"

he went on eagerly, "I was going to ask you to let them visit my new mother for a month on her estate. You know my father has married a wife, and an estate, near Insterburg. It would do your daughters a world of good, and they would be perfectly safe."

But Frau Meyer laughed him to scorn.

"You're not trying to make me believe that your aristocratic step-mother, who was a von Batocki before she married the first time, would receive as guests a railway porter's daughters? That's not even a good joke."

"I suppose I may at least say good-bye to Trudchen?" he asked, betraying himself by the facility with which he surrendered. Frau Meyer had no objections to his saying farewell, so she sent Trudchen in with a cup of coffee and pastries for his refreshment before he went.

Trudchen had heard, as usual, the whole dialogue. While she thought her mother was unfair, she was not yet sufficiently smitten to think of open revolt, and saw nothing strange in the young man's quiet, melancholy submission. He held her hand in parting, just a little longer than was necessary, told her that perhaps they would see each other again sooner than she expected, and took his departure. But Trudchen

kept the things he had said to her mother in her inmost heart, and was less lively than usual from that time on.

* * * *

One morning, many weeks after this, the postman brought a letter from the Rector who had confirmed the two Meyer girls, asking them to sing at a garden fête to be held a few days later in the interests of a local charity. Although they never went to church, their names were on the church roll, so there was nothing strange in this, seeing that their singing talent had been so widely advertised by the trip to Arnau. They accepted the invitation gladly, and had new evening dresses made specially for the occasion, cut in a style more aristocratic—which means (in Prussia) a little lower in the neck and shorter in the sleeves—than any they had ever worn before.

They sang their simple songs with conspicuous vigour and success, and were invited, together with the other "artistes," into the Rectory to receive the thanks of the organising committee, and partake of the refreshments that were provided. There they found themselves being waited on by no less a person than Karl Piotrowski,

who turned out to be the member of the committee who had suggested their names. Karl, who seemed to be perfectly at home in the Rectory, got them skilfully away from the group of professionals who tried to patronise them, led them from one beautiful room to the other, and finally sat down with them in the conservatory. Gretchen, who during these days never thought of anything else but her Heinz, took these honours quite coolly, but Trudchen was completely intoxicated by the aristocratic atmosphere; her eyes danced and her cheeks burned with pleasure and excitement.

Karl had manœuvred them into a seat against a background of dark foliage, and after amusing them with his conversation for a few minutes, he suddenly took out a pencil and note book, and began to sketch.

"Let me see it!" exclaimed Trudchen, when he closed the book up again after a few minutes, and returned it to his pocket.

"Not now, my child!" he replied, "it's only a skeleton outline. I must transfer it to canvas, and then, if it's not too unworthy of its original, perhaps I'll show it to you. I really never saw such a picture as you are to-night. It's absolutely impossible to find any fault with it."

"You must take us back to Mama," said Gretchen; "she'll be wondering where we are."

As they repassed the group of professionals, Trudchen pulled down the front of her decolletage as far as possible to show them she was as professional as they, and then hastily pushed it up again when she noticed Karl watching her with a curious, amused smile.

Frau Meyer thanked the young man quite unsuspiciously for showing them around, and they walked home with their white shawls drawn tightly around their shoulders.

* * * *

When Karl Piotrowski sat down to study the next morning, he found his mind wandering more than usual. Presently he took a little note book out of his pocket, and began to examine the sketch he had made. Five minutes later Hammarston's Physiological Chemistry was lying in an ignominious heap on the sofa, and the young medico sat at his easel, mixing paints. Karl was a fairly good medical student, and a very clever amateur artist, so his quarters were half study and half studio.

He worked for several hours, and finished the picture, but was not quite satisfied with it

and made up his mind to have another look at the model. He knew that the girls sewed umbrellas for Wertheims, and had no difficulty in happening to meet them. He easily persuaded them to come and see the picture, for his quarters were not too far out of their way. Trudchen thus came face to face with herself, according to Karl's idea of her. It was not quite what she expected, and she blushed to see that he had changed her modest frock into an ultra-fashionable evening dress, such as she had never seen outside of the theatre. How had his fingers known how to fashion those swellings of her breasts that peeped out over the edge of the decolletage?

Karl watched her as she looked at the picture. Then he suddenly swung the easel around and began to paint again.

"Don't change a muscle of your face, Fraülein Trudchen!" he exclaimed. "That's just the expression I was trying to get."

The girl stood still for a moment, and then went round to watch him work. There was an infinite fascination in the sight of the brush playing about the life-size face and figure, and when the artist touched up the glistening point of her shoulder with the end of his finger, Trudchen

flushed up and drew back as if from a personal caress.

"We must be going now," said Gretchen. "Mother will wonder what has become of us."

Karl turned round and wiped his fingers.

"Why can't you come and give me a few proper sittings?" he asked. "I could work much better with my model before me. Half an hour each time would be long enough. There's nothing wrong in it, and your Frau Mother would never miss you. I'm sure Fraülein Gretchen would be willing to come with you?"

Trudchen was jubilant, and her sister absent-mindedly consented.

"I'll tell you what I'll do!" exclaimed the young man, with all the eagerness of an enthusiastic amateur to begin over again. "An early-Victorian dress would suit your figure much better than this. I'll do you over again, in drapery. It's very fashionable now; all the photographers are using it. I've plenty of it in the closet there, if it's not too dusty. Put on some clothes that you can adjust—you understand?"

Trudchen understood. All the way home she hummed a popular *Gassenhauer* that was going

the rounds; *Denn er hat mich ja nur auf die Schulter geküsst* ("For he only kissed me on the shoulder").

* * * *

When Frau Meyer came home from marketing the next morning, she was astonished to find the girls up already and the kitchen door locked. They opened it at once to her knock, and she perceived that someone had been taking the only kind of a bath that was obtainable in the Meyer's dwelling. They explained that they had walked themselves into a perspiration the preceding day, and felt uncomfortably dirty. This was not altogether a unique experience, so the mother thought no more about it.

In reality, only Trudchen had scrubbed herself, Gretchen giving special attention to such areas of her sister's back as were inaccessible to the younger girl's unaided efforts. She had then put on her choicest "undies," as if she was going to the clinic for a medical examination. There are few things that a respectable Prussian girl fears more than to come under the hands of a physician or policeman, by accident or otherwise, unless she feels that she can be undressed without shame to the very core. Trudchen wore a plain brown street costume when she went to her artist-lover

that morning, but underneath the sombre exterior there was a perfect picture of perfumed pink and white of which the owner had not the slightest reason to be ashamed.

" I'll go into the next room while Fraülein Gretchen fixes you up," said Karl, obligingly. " Don't be too long ! "

Gretchen did her best, but her sister was not satisfied. Karl had forgotten to leave them a mirror, and Trudchen's idea of " how much it is best to show " seemed far too liberal to the staid, elder sister.

When Karl was at last called back, he held up his hands in horror.

" Oh, my child ! " he exclaimed, " that will never do. Why, it looks like a towel wrapped about your neck, as though you had the influenza ! I told you to make an ' early Victorian ' dress out of it, ' slipping deliciously off your shoulders,' as the novelists put it."

" *You* fix me up, then ! " said Trudchen.

Gretchen stood back aghast at this audacity, and the young man came up to her, nothing loath.

A few minutes later, when he held a mirror before her, she was quite satisfied. Her plump, glistening shoulders stood high out of a pile of

gauze no whiter than they. Trudchen was getting on fast. She felt that she need not fear comparison with any of the post card actresses in the window of the stationer's shop in the *Vorstadt*, and there was a delicious thrill in being able to show herself thus to her lover in the unkind light of broad day without shame. She knew her sister's neck was too thin for such a display.

Gretchen was worried and annoyed when she discovered to what she had committed herself. Karl did not hurry himself with the picture, and quite a number of sittings were necessary. The elder sister had promised not to tell, but she felt that things were getting out of her control. Trudchen was as lively as ever during the brief visits to Karl's lodgings, but at home her absent-mindedness brought her mother almost to the point of consulting a doctor.

One evening Frau Meyer received an anonymous note:

> "If you watch your girls when they go to Wertheims, you'll see something to surprise you."

As luck would have it they were very busy the next day, and had no time for the usual visit, but Trudchen insisted on running to tell the young man not to wait for them, leaving her

sister waiting at the street corner. Frau Meyer, coming slowly down the street from another direction, saw her younger daughter come alone out of a strange house, and run back into the main thoroughfare at a rate at which her mother could not follow. Enquiries at the little shop around the corner brought out the name of Karl Piotrowski as one of the tenants in the house, and that the local gossips were already busy with the ladies who visited him so regularly.

Frau Meyer got home first, and put in half an hour's grim thinking before the girls arrived. Whatever the truth might be, she knew that if any rumour reached Herr Meyer's ears, almost anything might happen. The icy fear in her heart for herself as well as the girl made her act at once.

"What have you been doing in Herr Piotrowski's house?" she demanded, without the slightest warning, when the girls came in. Gretchen fled weeping into the bedroom, but Trudchen stood her ground, dry-eyed and defiant.

"I've nothing to say about it!" she replied.

"You'd better get away before your father comes in," said Frau Meyer, taking the little imitation book-cover that held her private store of ready money, and emptying it upon the table.

"Here is five hundred Marks. You had better go to Danzig, to Aunt Minna's, and stay till you find something there to do. I'll tell your father we had a wire that you should come on a visit. If you get a telegram to go on to Berlin, don't wait an hour. If your father hears anything, he'll start at once. You'll have to shift for yourself."

Then she suddenly broke out into a storm of weeping, lamentations, and reproaches, for in Prussia, as the classic example of the great, lachrymose Frederic shows, tearless eyes and set features do not always go together with a hard heart and the most unflinching stubbornness of purpose.

"*Ach Gott, ach Gott!*" wailed the mother, between fits of violent sobbing; "all these years I've slaved and toiled for that ungrateful child from early morning till late at night, raised her and trained her, and given my whole life for her happiness, fed her with the best to be had and dressed her like a princess, and saved and scraped for her so that she should be happy in life, and now she turns round and pulls us all down into shame and mud and slime and disgrace, and deceives her father and mother who have done everything for her! And you, Gretchen! knew all about it, and said nothing!"

The younger girl's crime being past punishment, she attacked the elder, who received a shower of cuffs and slaps with unresisting sobs. Then she turned to Trudchen again: "You're a bad, wicked girl! I always knew you would come to a bad end with your tricks and your slyness. You know you ought to be stripped and whipped until the blood runs, and I'd let your father do it if I wasn't afraid he'd kill you! Go, you ungrateful child, and never let me see your face again!"

Trudchen was dressing and packing with quiet celerity. She was already old enough to know that her mother's terrible phrases were not to be taken seriously, but that for the moment it would be useless to protest, or explain, or resist. She already had the dim outlines of a plan of action, and was anxious to get away as soon as possible.

Herr Piotrowski stood aghast at the sudden apparition of the white-lipped, set-faced girl, with eyes of jet-like glitter, who had left him with a laugh and a merry wink only an hour before. And he was even more troubled when he heard her story. He perceived by her coming to him that she had accepted implicitly his hasty, impromptu offer to her mother, and although he

had taken a very real fancy to her, the situation was most uncomfortable.

"But, my dear child," he protested, "can't I go to your father and mother and explain to them how unreasonable their attitude is, and that there has been absolutely no breach of propriety? You know, this is the first time you have really been within my apartments without your sister."

"If you go to my father, he'll shoot you!" said Trudchen, quietly. "If it all comes out right, he'll come round, but don't go near him now. They'll keep it from him as long as possible, and say I'm on a visit."

"Well, if you need any money," said Karl, taking out his purse, "you know I'm yours to the last *Pfennig*."

"No, no!" she exclaimed, backing off and blushing for the first time, "I have plenty of money. But I thought I ought to come and tell you what had happened before I go."

Karl cursed himself inwardly for having been such a fool as to commit himself. The girl insisted on taking him at his word. He determined to disillusion her.

"My dearest Trudchen," he began, desperately, "you know I love you dearly, and asked your mother's permission to court you. But she

refused, and in a way she was right, for my father has many old-fashioned ideas, and has just married a rich young widow; so he expects great things of me, and I am quite at his mercy—for the present, at least."

Trudchen cast down her eyes at this, and withdrew towards the door. Although her mind was too full with other things to realise at once the full import of his words, she began to perceive that she was on false ground. He knew he was doing a cruel thing, and followed her.

"My poor, dear child!" he cried, using for the first time the familiar *Du*; "thou knowest I would do anything for thee, and it breaks my heart to see thee turned thus out of house and home on my account. But wait patiently a little while! Perhaps something will happen."

"I can wait," said Trudchen, quietly, withdrawing her hands from his. "Where is your father?"

"In Danzig."

The dim, half-formed plans that had been floating around in the girl's supersaturated mind were crystallised in a flash by this happy coincidence. She had been thinking of Felicitas all the time, and suddenly her way was clear.

They parted without kisses or tears, as true

tragic lovers should, and late in the afternoon of the same day Trudchen stood knocking at the servants' entrance of Herr Piotrowski's *Gartenhaus* in the world-old city of Danzig. She asked for the cook, found the cook, got her into a private corner, and opened fire immediately.

"I want your place as cook here," she explained, tersely. "I'll give you a hundred marks to get sick, or suddenly called away, and recommend me as a substitute. If I can't hold the place for a week, you'll be welcome to come back."

The cook was naturally sceptical, for the girl looked no older than she was; but the gold pieces Trudchen took out of her reticule were weighty arguments. The cook was engaged to be married, but she still had something to save.

"Make it five hundred," she said, "and I'm yours!"

They finally agreed on two hundred and fifty. Trudchen would not spend all her reserve.

The next day the cook received a telegram, and Trudchen was installed temporarily in her place.

Frau Meyer had cooked for years in the hotel opposite the Pillauer Bahnhof, and had there picked up her first acquaintance with

Gepäckträger Meyer. Her girls had been taught all she knew.

There are certain slight but characteristic differences between the cooking in East Prussia and West Prussia. Trudchen attempted only a simple dinner, seeing that the mistress of the house was away on a visit, and she was left to her own devices; but Herr Piotrowski, a native of Cranz, noticed at once the subtle alteration in flavour which made all the difference to his unfaithful appetite. He made no remark at first, but after half-a-dozen perfect dinners and suppers, seasoned exactly to his palate, and varied with admirable taste, he went into the kitchen to have a look at this wonderful cook who worked so efficiently, but never showed herself, sending in the food with the parlourmaid.

Although Herr Piotrowski was a "millionaire" (it takes only £40,000 to make a Prussian millionaire), his house was not large, and he only kept three or four servants. Thus the cook had the kitchen to herself, and as the stoves and ranges in Prussia are dust-tight, tiled, and need filling only once a day, there is no call for a smutty "general" to carry on a constant warfare against dirt.

The Prussian housewife's pride is her kitchen,

and Trudchen knew how to keep a kitchen. When Herr Piotrowski entered the room she happened to be in the pantry, and he had a moment to inspect the glittering taps at the sink, the polished steel fittings of the range, and the rows of glistening crockery on the shelves. He occasionally made such unexpected visits, even now that he was married again, and commonly expressed his disapproval by writing with his finger-tip the word *Sau* (sow) on any dust-covered surface he discovered. To-day he found no such places. The shelves were laid with fresh paper. The shining lids of saucepans, spice-jars, and provision cases offered no targets for his brutal sarcasm. He turned suddenly round at last, having examined the remotest corner, and found a slipper-footed, bright-eyed little girl of eighteen, in a wide, blue overall, watching him with an amused smile from her place at the range.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

"I'm cooking for Lieschen while she's away," replied the girl; "can't you put up with me any longer?"

"Have you cleaned this place up, and done the cooking also?"

"I thought I might as well, seeing it needed cleaning badly, and I could only cook simple

dishes which do not take much time. Lieschen told me she had no help in the kitchen, and I wanted to leave it in shape for her when she comes back."

"Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is Gertrud Meyer, if that's what you mean. My father is a railway porter in Königsberg."

"Oh!. Ah! I've heard of the *Königsberger Gepäckträger* before. Very superior lot. I say, my dear, what'll you take to come here and cook for me regularly?"

"Oh, Sir, I couldn't think of taking Lieschen's place. I've never been out, you know. I was visiting my aunt, who lives in the Stettinerstrasse, and Lieschen asked me to come and take her place for a few days while she went home to nurse her mother. I never cooked for strangers before."

"I believe you!" muttered Herr Piotrowski, half to himself; "that's why she seems to put some soul into it. See here!" he went on, addressing her again, "doesn't your friend Lieschen want to get married?"

"I think she does, but she hasn't saved enough money yet."

"Now listen! You seem to be a sensible

sort of girl, and I suppose you'll want to get married sometime, more's the pity! But if I give your friend a couple of hundred Marks to finish up her *Aussteuer*, will you come and cook for me then?"

"I can't imagine why you want me to cook for you," replied Trudchen. "I should have to write home to my father, and hear what he says."

"I'll make you a good offer," continued Herr Piotrowski; "I'll settle up with your friend, as I've already said, and give you a hundred Marks a month—that's more than she got—if you'll go on cooking for me as you have during the last week, and keep the kitchen looking as it does now! What do you say to that?"

"I'll write home and ask my father," said Trudchen.

Two days later she took in Herr Piotrowski's morning coffee herself and announced that her father had given her permission to stay, if she wanted to, but that she must come home at once if she found the work too hard.

"You shall have a servant in the kitchen to help you the day you ask for it," promised Herr Piotrowski. "Here's the two hundred Marks for your friend—see to it that she never comes

here again—and half of your first month's wages in advance."

Trudchen was at first a little troubled about the two hundred Marks, for she had not the slightest idea as to Lieschen's whereabouts, but seeing that Lieschen already had two hundred and fifty, she finally decided she would be justified in adding it to her own carefully guarded treasure.

After this Trudchen served and waited on the "Lord of the House" herself, keeping his room in order, watching his clothes and boots, and attending assiduously to his every need, retiring only into the kitchen during the brief, infrequent visits of Frau Piotrowski.

This loving couple had disagreed almost from the start. Frau Piotrowski loved her dirty, Polish estate, which the whip of Prussian discipline had never licked into shape, and got her husband over the border as often as she could. Herr Piotrowski, although of Polish blood, was Prussian by birth and education, and naturally abhorred the lax, easy-go-lucky fashion in which the great estate, at fearful sacrifice of good land and good material, was allowed to manage itself. He knew he could triple his wife's income in three years, but he would have to fight the whole population of the district and the wife as well,

so he went back to his office and fishing-smacks at Danzig, and comforted himself by pinching Trudchen's peach-down cheeks and eating her splendid dinners, usually in solitary state.

Before she had been with him three months, he made her housekeeper, in his wife's absence, and doubled her wage. The girl fully understood her peril, but kept him so skilfully off that even the envious servants flung no mud at her. Her first object was to make herself indispensable, and in that she completely succeeded. Herr Piotrowski often said to himself that if he had married such a girl he might have been a happy man. But he consoled himself with the thought that she probably didn't have a thousand marks to her name, and his Anna-Marie's money had certainly helped him out of one bad scrape.

Towards the end of the year, he called for her to bring his afternoon coffee into his room one day, and then suddenly asked her what she wanted for a Christmas present. Trudchen had not thought of springing her plot yet, but she could not ignore this opening.

"I want a friend," she said, simply.

Herr Piotrowski protested his willingness to serve in any way.

"Will you listen to my story?" she asked. "It's not long."

He urged her to sit down and tell him all about it.

"Once upon a time," she began, "a young man met a young girl, and they fell in love with each other."

"Extraordinary!"

"But the man's parents were rich, and the girl's parents were poor, so the man told the girl he couldn't marry her, and the girl's parents turned her out and sent her away to her aunt's because she contrived to see her lover occasionally."

"Very sensible of them!"

"You are a rich man, Herr Piotrowski. If you were young, with plenty of money, would you rather marry a poor girl who would love you truly and serve you faithfully and do her best to make you happy, or would you prefer some pretty, stuck-up toy, who cared only for your money and position, perhaps, and would in any case want you to spend all your time amusing her?"

"Money is very handy sometimes," said Herr Piotrowski, "and there's no reason why a rich man and a rich woman shouldn't love each other,

although it's notorious that they generally don't. If you were the poor girl to compare with most of the rich girls I know, I'm bound to admit the choice would not be easy."

"What would you think if a man in such a case should marry the girl and lose his money?"

"I should call him a frightful fool."

"You would not help such a young man to get started in some other line where he could make a respectable living?"

"What! And lose forever the best cook I ever had? I see it was very impolitic to mention Christmas presents!"

"Then perhaps you'll lose your cook anyway!"

"So! There's going to be a strike then, is there? Well, what can I do?"

"I've heard you mention the young man's parents, so I know you know them—I mustn't tell you who they are yet—but I am sure you could influence them—give them a good account of me—at least, if you think you honestly can. . . ."

"Trudchen, I'd rather lose ten thousand Marks than lose you, but I suppose it must come some time. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a thousand Marks, in addition to your salary, towards your *Aussteuer*, for every year that you

stay with me before your marriage. You don't want to get married right away ? "

" You are very kind indeed," admitted Trudchen ; " I had no idea you thought that much of me. No, we can't get married yet—you know I'm only eighteen—but will you promise to put in a good word for me with Herr . . . I mustn't tell you yet !—when the time comes ? "

" Yes, I'll help you all I can—tell them you're the best cook in Germany."

" I don't mean that ; will you try to get them to consent to the . . . the marriage ? "

" Certainly ! I'll do anything to please you. When you touch a man's stomach, you've got him, sure ! "

" On your word of honour ? "

" What a child it is ! Of course ! On my word of honour ! "

Trudchen kissed his hand three times and waltzed laughing out of the room, a tray of coffee things whirling dangerously round her.

* * * *

The next afternoon but one Karl Piotrowski stood at his door and stared half-dazed at the little bundle of furs before him, out of which

peeped the face that had haunted him for months, try as he would to banish it.

"Trudchen!"

"I wondered if you would know me—if you had quite forgotten me."

"Where have you been all this time?"

"Guess!"

"Give it up!"

"I've been cooking for a certain elderly gentleman who lives in the Weidengasse at Danzig."

"*Donnerwetter!* You don't mean to tell me you're the paragon cook my precious pseudo-mamma is so jealous of?"

"Well, I never heard of that," replied Trudchen. "I've always kept out of the way when she was there. But I've told my master—he is really a very kind-hearted old man—our story. I haven't told him who you are yet, but he has promised to help us in every way. I thought I had better see you first, if you still cared enough about me. . . ."

Trudchen's speech was violently interrupted at this point. Three minutes later she stood before the mirror in Karl's bedroom, ordering her somewhat dishevelled hair, while the young man went away to look for the picture he had stored upstairs and tried to forget. He found it in good

order, tacked it into a light frame, and the two started back to Danzig with it.

* * * *

That evening Herr Piotrowski sat at the table in the dining-room with his paper. He had rung for his supper, and paid no attention to the opening of the door, and the soft, familiar foot-fall. But when he chanced to look up he nearly slipped out of his chair. His dumpy little cook-and-housekeeper, with her everlasting blue over-all, had transformed herself into a beautiful, slender-figured girl in an elegant black tea-gown, and a light chain of gold to call attention to the "Venus-wrinkle" around her full, white throat.

"Don't mind my dress," she reassured him; "my friend has been to visit me, and I had to put something on. He is so thankful for your promised aid that he has brought you a little present. I hope it will please you."

She unwrapped the picture and held it up with one arm, balanced on the table, before him.

Herr Piotrowski looked from the dark-eyed white-shouldered form in the picture to the glowing-cheeked original, whose bust and arms shone like snow through the black lace bodice of the tea-gown.

"The artist has not flattered his model," he said; "but it is easy to see that he put his heart into it. I wonder at his parting with it."

"He would think it a great honour to thank you personally for your kindness to me," said Trudchen.

"Certainly. Bring him in. Where have you got him, anyway? In the kitchen? That's against the rules, you know! And I must thank him for the picture and congratulate him on his good luck. I can truly say I envy him."

A moment later the old man saw his son enter the room from the kitchen, with Trudchen on his arm. They knelt before him.

"Give us your blessing, father!" said Karl.

"You know you promised, on your word of honour, to help us in every way," reminded Trudchen, looking up into his face with melting eyes.

There was a long minute's silence. Then, in a low, gruff voice: "It's the most awful cheat I ever heard of. But I always keep my word!"

In an instant soft arms were around his neck, and softer lips on his cheek.

"Don't you see, you dear old *Feinschmecker!*" explained Trudchen, "that it's the best thing that can happen to you after all? You thought

you would have to lose me some time, but now you can always keep me, for I shall stay with you until we're married, and then you can stay with us as long as you please!"

"So this is the girl you told me about, that you nearly got into a pickle with!" said the father, eyeing his son suspiciously. "You seem to be almost as frightful a swindle as she is!"

Karl thought it best not to deny this accusation.

"Mind you marry her right away, and make sure of her!" ordered the father, "or you'll lose her! That girl would marry the Crown Prince if she took a fancy to him!"

Karl stood just before his final examinations, so they set the date at Easter, which coincided almost exactly with Trudchen's nineteenth birthday. The announcement of the engagement was published at once in the Danzig and Königsberg papers, but there was no further ceremony save that Karl bought his *Braut* a ring. The Prussian engagement ring is a plain, gold band, worn on the left hand until the wedding, when it is transferred to the right. This illustrates the fact of an "engaged state" (*Brautstand*) in Prussia, which is only less intimate than the marriage state itself.

The Meyers, who had heard very little of Trudchen, were *rein vom Stengel gefallen* (fallen clean off the stalk) at the published notice. The father, who was still in ignorance of the true cause of Trudchen's sudden departure, was moved to tears when the young couple called on them the next day. He came down handsomely with his own private funds, when he found what a brilliant "partie" his daughter had made, and augmented her *Aussteuer* to ten thousand Marks, a very respectable sum even for a *Frau Doktor!* It would furnish a moderately large flat in first class Prussian style.

"Your husband shall never say," he declared, "that you came to him penniless, or that he had to furnish the house!"

After the father had gone, Frau Meyer remarked thoughtfully, "I never could imagine who wrote that note that put me on your track."

"I did!" said Trudchen.

HOCHZEIT.

"*Hochzeit*," or "High-time," is the appropriate German term for the climax of sex experience.

Gretchen's wedding was to take place on *Heiligen-Abend* (Holy-Eve, December 24th). For weeks the young couple had been building their nest. They had rented a new flat in the *Hufen*, a modern suburb. Their four-roomed dwelling would cost £50 a year, which price included steam heating and electric lighting. The house was fitted up with every convenience and device calculated to make the young wife's work easy and pleasant. The floors were of polished wood, and painted with a hard, almost unscratchable varnish, so that linoleum was quite unnecessary, and wiping with a dry cloth kept them in perfect order. The glitter of these floors was relieved by laying rugs in the doorways and the centres of the rooms. The bathroom and kitchen floors and walls were finished in blue tiles. The kitchen stove was electric. A

small door in one corner of the kitchen opened into the shaft of a hand-lift, whereby all provisions were brought directly into the kitchen from the street door of the house. The central heating kept the whole house at a sickly warmth even in the coldest weather. The window panes were double, and the sashes edged with felt, and as there were no fire-places nor open flues, draughts were impossible, even if a window were left open. The aboriginal apes of East Prussia must have been of a hibernating variety, for the Prussians seem to have inherited the power to live quite without ventilation.

Gretchen and her *Braütigam* had bought their furniture little by little, spinning out the pleasure as long as possible. They had set it up and arranged it with their own hands, having for some weeks spent every moment of spare time at this fascinating task. The genuine Prussian housewife always takes any new visitor on a tour of inspection through all her rooms. First there is the *Empfangszimmer* (reception room), facetiously known as the *Möbelkammer* (furniture shop), with its heavy, plush-upholstered *Garnitur*, consisting of a sofa and two easy chairs, its *Etagerenschrank* (a kind of glorified clothes-press, where the choicest linen is stored, with a drawer

at the top for the state-silver), standing in the opposite corner, its fancy work writing-desk (*Schreibtisch*) placed considerately in the best light near the window, although it is hardly ever used, and its elaborate chandelier hanging from the centre of the ceiling. Next comes the *Esszimmer* (eating room), with its well-stored buffet, its large, white-covered table, seldom bare, and its less showy, but more comfortable sofa, made for use. Then there is the bedroom, which usually overflows into the dining-room as the family grows, but originally contains two narrow beds, standing side by side, covered with a single, enormous, and elaborately ornate counterpane. The crowning glory of the house is shown last. The kitchen is usually as large as any other room in the dwelling, and, with its large window, its rows of blue crockery and enamelled ware, and its shining fittings of polished brass and steel, is altogether a creation of light and airy beauty where neither soot nor dust nor dirt can find any corner of refuge. The Prussian house-wife glories in her kitchen, and gives it more thought and care than any other room in the house. Its shelves and window-ledges are trimmed with crocheted decorations of her own manufacture, its walls adorned with

handworked towels bearing in red, embroidered letters, such sensible mottoes as :—

*" Sauberkeit in Küch' und Keller,**
Etwas gutes auf dem Teller,
Giebt die beste Harmonie ! "

or

" Mag draussen die Welt ihr Wesen treiben,†
Mein Heim soll meine Ruhstatt bleiben ! "

Prussian weddings nearly always consist of a double ceremony. The legal marriage must take place in the Registrar's office, usually in the forenoon, immediately after the wedding breakfast. For this occasion the bride wears a coloured dress. After the noon-day dinner, she is dressed again in white, and there is an *Einsegnung*, or " Blessing," in the church or chapel, or in her own home, at which a clergyman or minister officiates. The ceremony is simply a repetition of the marriage formulæ couched in more religious terms, and followed by a prayer. The bride wears a veil as in England, but is crowned with a myrtle wreath.

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* Cleanliness in kitchen and cellar,
And always something good to eat,
Makes for perfect harmony !
Let the world without carry on as it will,
My home shall always be restful and still !

Frau Meyer spared no expense to make Gretchen's wedding all that it ought to be. There was a white carriage, drawn by four white horses, for the bridal pair, and three other carriages for the guests. Several state meals had to be served, for the guests were to stay all day, and could be trusted to remain nearly all night. The wedding supper is a little more elaborate and expensive than the engagement feast, the supply of wine more liberal, and the general hilarity greater.

Gretchen's wedding celebrations were complicated by the fact that Christmas Eve is the German Boxing-day, and the necessary ceremonies of that occasion cannot be ignored. The young bride and her husband, together with Trudchen and Curt, were unceremoniously turned into the kitchen for half an hour while the tree in the front room was being decorated, and the piles of presents arranged about it. At the sound of "*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*", (Silent Night, Holy Night), played by one of the guests on the hired piano, the children of the family filed into the light and glory of burning candles and glittering spangles, and all sang together that most touching and beautiful Christmas song in the world. Then each of the

children had to "say his piece," and from this exercise even the young bridegroom, so recently adopted into the family, was not excused. Luckily he happened to remember some verses, and got through the ordeal without disaster, but Gretchen, in the excitement of the double event, stuck in the middle of her piece, and was dismissed in disgrace with a friendly box on each ear, "one to neutralise the other." Nothing abashed, she went over to the table and at once began to explore her pile of splendid presents, which included many of her wedding gifts. Trudchen had forgotten to learn her piece, but she managed to read over her father's shoulder some verses in a decorative frame hanging from the wall, and the old man was already too far gone to detect this glaring fraud.

This rite over, the presents were cleared away, the Christmas tree taken from the centre of the table and placed near the uncurtained window, so that any passers-by could have some share of the abundant light within, and the wedding supper served. Weddings are the occasions on which the Prussian displays most freely the mediæval coarseness which lies at other times more or less latent in his nature. No joke is too *riskiert*, no tale too filthy, to be told at a wedding.

Men and women vie with each other in trying to make the young bride blush, and the most unmentionable topics are hilariously discussed.

At the end of the first toast, the wreath was suddenly snatched from the bride's head, and her veil torn to bits. There was a wild scramble for the fragments, which are kept as mementoes of such occasions. Then a little white matron's cap (*Haube*) was set upon Gretchen's head, the whole ceremony signifying that she was no more a girl, but a house-wife.

Honeymoon trips are a rare thing in Prussia. Towards midnight the groom usually begins to grow restless, and the wise mother sends them off to their own home before too much wine has been drunk. Both Luther and Goethe give full instructions as to the proper mode of procedure on such occasions, and those who are interested can consult the original.

The guests carouse and drink to the happiness of the young couple until the morning sun shines in upon them and sends them likewise home.

FUNERAL.

"CHILDREN, children!" exclaimed Frau Meyer, rushing into the kitchen, "someone is dead! Come into the parlour!"

They all hurried after her into the front room.

"Can't you smell it?" she asked.

They sniffed the air, but their less delicate senses could not detect the subtle odour.

"I opened the door," explained the mother, "and the smell of flowers was so strong that I nearly fainted. See, there are no flowers in the room, and the smell is gone, too. I tell you, some near relative has died during the night."

Curt was the family doubter, but even his scepticism was broken when, half an hour later, Aunt Lenchen came running in, breathless and dishevelled, with the news.

"Uncle Otto was found dead in his bed this morning!" she announced. "The doctor says heart failure."

Uncle Otto was an old man, and his children

all safely married, so there was no pretence of great sorrow.

"There'll be a grand funeral, I suppose," remarked Frau Meyer. "He was in the *Postverein*, and Aunt Frieda will get a thousand Marks for the burial. I shall have to get a new black dress, my old alpaca is too shabby."

That day week they went to the funeral. The house was full of people, laughing, chatting, eating, and drinking, shedding now and then a maudlin tear by way of variety. There was no reason why Uncle Otto should not die, and his meagre savings were not worth quarrelling about. They were there to do honour to the dead, and get two or three good meals at the expense of the *Postverein* in part payment for their new clothes and the wreaths of flowers custom compelled them to bring.

The sideboard and tables were loaded with eatables and drinks such as did not require much preparation. Beer and wine flowed freely. The dead man's wife and daughters had so much to do in waiting on the guests that there was little opportunity for them to give vent to their own sorrow. Sometimes the bereaved mother would slip for a moment into the room where her husband's body lay in state to kiss his cold lips

and sob over her life-long companion; but well-meaning relatives would call her away again as soon as possible, ask her this and that and the other to divert her mind, and press the wine-glass to her unwilling lips.

The corpse lay in a wide, deep coffin, one side of which turned down on a hinge to give the visitors a full view of the body. It had already been photographed, and the icy cheeks repeatedly kissed by all the nearer relatives. Prussian mediævalism is shown by the belief that the coffin must be broad and deep, so that the departed shall not feel cramped for lack of room. The body is usually dressed in fancy night-garments, laid on a soft feather bed, and covered with a warm quilt.

There was nothing striking about the Pastor's short oration, save its tone of icy coldness. He spoke of the dead as a man of honour and business integrity, but did not hesitate to mention the fact that he had not attended church or taken the sacrament for many years, and that others should take his sudden death as a warning.

At the grave, the Pastor, the wife, and each of the sons and daughters threw in turn handfuls of earth upon the lowered coffin, pronouncing meanwhile the grim formula:

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Then the widow made a brief speech, with perfect composure, first of appreciation of the good qualities of her husband, and then thanking the relatives and friends for their sympathy and attentions.

The carriages took them home; there was eating and drinking again, and finally the visitors departed, leaving the house in a condition which would require a week's hard labour on the part of the widow to put it into order again.

LIESCHEN.

Now that both her daughters were safely married Frau Meyer felt free to accept a suggestion that had often been made, viz., that she should take her niece, Lieschen Reimer, into her home, and train her for the marriage market. Lieschen was an orphan girl of seventeen who had been brought up in the country near Memel on the farm of another uncle. But she was handsome and intelligent, and a council of relatives agreed that she would have a much better chance in Königsberg. She had already been allowed to save a few hundred Marks towards her *Aussteuer*, and if she could work into the umbrella sewing occupation which Gretchen and Trudchen had dropped, she would be able, in two or three years, to save enough to get married on. So she was delivered over, nothing loath, body and soul, to the care of the Meyers.

Now that her daughters were satisfactorily disposed of, Frau Meyer might justly have granted herself a little repose, but energetic spirit knew

no rest. Trudchen's ten thousand Mark dowry had cleared out nearly all of their reserves. Curt had not yet finished his course, and she knew there would soon be a crop of grandchildren, with voracious appetites for presents of all kinds. Prussian families stick together with remarkable solidity, financial as well as moral. Grandparents and childless aunts and uncles work on to the end of their strength, giving as liberally as they can to help the struggling younger generation. Curt Meyer owed his Gymnasium fees largely to an aunt who kept a little milk-shop in Eylau. The fond old woman sometimes came to Königsberg, in her outlandish country costume, to sell butter. Curt never recognised her publicly if he had any chum with him, and had often pushed by her without a glance, leaving the bowed, trembling old woman on the pavement, to gaze after him with troubled, tearful eyes. Yet she often came to the Meyers, and never failed to press a gold piece furtively into the ungrateful young student's hand if he happened to be there, and he was not too proud to accept it. Every birthday she sent him socks, and mufflers, and woollen waistcoats which her knotty, rheumatic fingers had knitted, but he seldom troubled to write even a letter of thanks. She often said that she

could not understand the younger generation, but that did not alter her love or faithfulness.

Frau Meyer, anticipating such future demands on her depleted resources, set to work again as soon as Trudchen was married. She taught Lieschen how to make umbrellas, knitted indefatigably for her new sons-in-law and their yet hypothetical children, and got Curt to find her a new tenant for the front parlour.

Fritz Sonnenschein had a mother of his own in Memel, and took for granted the care Frau Meyer bestowed on him. Frau Meyer was satisfied with him, for he kept fairly regular hours, seldom brought in his friends and never attempted to fight duels in her parlour. More than once, in former years, when the thrilling cry of *Auf die Mensur* had rung through her rooms, and the house began to tremble and vibrate under the rapid feet of the duellists, she had had to turn the whole riotous band out of doors at five minutes' notice, sometimes with the help of the Police. Fritz had sense enough to fight his duels elsewhere, and although he was sometimes brought home drunk, it did not happen too often, and he kept strictly to his own room and minded his own business.

For the first few months he paid little attention to the timid, soft-footed girl who cleaned his boots, laid his fires, brought in his coffee in the morning, and was always ready to run on any errand. He was used to being waited on by his sisters, knew also the perils of flirtation in private families, and was conscious of Frau Meyer's sleepless vigilance. But daily contact wore off the girl's awestruck reverence for the fine gentleman in the front room, and Fritz unwisely allowed himself to watch her graceful movements and blushing cheeks as she tidied up his room. She never spoke unless spoken to, and then her answers were monosyllabic. If he cracked a joke within her comprehension, she ran into the kitchen and giggled there, out of his hearing. She never stayed in his room an instant longer than her duties demanded.

Perhaps the mischief started when she accidentally touched his hand in giving him a glass of water, or when, on their both stooping to pick up a fallen pencil, their heads cracked smartly together. Fritz soon noticed the electric discharge between them whenever contact was established, for he was familiar with the phenomenon; but Lieschen could not understand what made her blush and start so foolishly whenever he spoke to her.

One morning, as he was leaving, he met her by chance in the dark little entrance corridor, and for the first time held out his hand to her. The girl drew back, startled, not understanding the movement at first.

"Won't you shake hands with me, Fraülein Lieschen?" he said. She blushed deeply at her awkwardness, and laid her plump, firm little hand in his. He held it.

"Are you going to the *Soldaten-ball* at the barracks next week? It's the Kaiser's birthday, you know."

"No!" she declared, blushing still more deeply at the unintentional insult, and trying to withdraw her hand. Only servant girls and factory hands of the lowest classes went to the common soldiers' ball allowed once a year in the great barracks. Unmentionable things often happened there during the hilarious celebration of the great War-Lord's birthday, for there was general leave until midnight, and plenty of beer.

Fritz perceived his blunder, and apologised.

"But Uncle Gottfried has already brought us tickets for the *Unteròffiziers-ball*," explained Lieschen.

Frau Meyer was determined to give the girl the same chances her daughters had enjoyed.

"I see," answered Fritz. "They tell me there's plenty of fun at these balls sometimes."

"I've never been to one, yet," said Lieschen; "but Aunt Anna says that many students come, and sometimes a few officers. Of course, the officers don't bring their wives."

"Perhaps I'll have time to look in for a little while," admitted Fritz, condescendingly. "What kind of a dress are you going to wear?"

"Oh, it's the prettiest dress I ever had, white, a real dance frock. I tried it on yesterday, and Auntie says I look like a peach. You know what a peach is, don't you? They have them in the window at Rosenthals, for three *Groschen* each. I never tasted one, but they look delicious. Did you ever eat one?"

"I have, as it happens, enjoyed that pleasure," replied Fritz; "but they don't always taste as fine as they look. Tell me something more about your frock."

"Oh, it's all white, with a broad pink sash and a butterfly bow behind, and it has short sleeves and is *dekolletiert* in front just like the dresses you see at the theatre, and I have a little pearl necklace to wear and a new white silk shawl, and we're going to have a taxi to go in, and I know we're going to have a heavenly time!"

"Will you dance with me if I come?" asked Fritz.

Lieschen had been told at the country dances she had formerly attended that she danced very well, but she was not so sure of herself here in the great city. The thought of being whirled around in the arms of such a fine gentleman as Fritz fairly took away her breath.

"Will you really dance with me?" she asked. "Oh, it will be just lovely!"

Fritz smiled at her innocence.

"You'll have plenty of offers," he assured her; "I went to a masked ball last week, and there wasn't a girl there as pretty as you!"

"I don't like masked balls," said Lieschen, to cover her delighted blushes. "The men all say '*Du*' to you so rudely, and sometimes they play nasty tricks. But I like the dancing after supper, when they are all so gentle and polite, and come with their bows and make one feel like a real queen."

All this time he had been holding her hand. She had tried to withdraw it once or twice, but he held it fast, and she thought it might be the proper thing as long as their conversation lasted. At least it was very comfortable there,

and every time he pressed it she trembled to her very toe-tips.

Then Frau Meyer suddenly opened the kitchen door. Lieschen started back, and betrayed herself irretrievably.

"It's time to peel the potatoes, Lieschen!" said her aunt, in a cold hard voice. The girl slipped past her to the sink, and Frau Meyer, without troubling to close the door, advanced to the young man.

"Out you go!" she hissed; "get your things together as soon as you can!"

"But, Frau Meyer!" he protested, "I don't understand you!"

"Do you think I'm blind? I had a sister once . . . I know all the signs. You can't fool me. The girl shan't be ruined by anyone, least of all by a *schnodderigeren Studenten!*"

"But, my dear woman, there has been absolutely nothing, I assure you; and if there had been, I beg you to realise that I am a man of honour!"

"Don't talk to me of students' honour! It may be good enough for getting your cheeks chopped up, but it doesn't help an innocent girl that may come your way. Another child's heart broken, another life ruined, would be just

another feather in your cap to brag to your *Kamaraden* about!"

"But, Frau Meyer, I'm ready to be perfectly fair, and offer . . ."

"To pay the poor child ten Marks a month after you've finished with her! Many thanks!"

"You're really too hard on a fellow! Don't you ever expect your niece to marry?"

"Marry? You make me tired! The son of a Colonel of the Prussian Guards marry a penniless orphan girl? It's not even a good joke!"

"But your own daughter married the son of *Geheimrat* Piotrowski!"

"Yes, but she was my daughter, and had ten thousand Marks, and a *Geheimrat* who has made his money fishing is not a Colonel. But for all your father's a Colonel, you're not a gentleman! Do you think Karl Piotrowski came here and made love to Trudchen in the corridor? Not he! He came to the right place first, before he ever said a word to the girl, or held her hand for three seconds. I know you fellows! You come around with your fine speeches, putting foolish notions into silly girls' heads, while your own hearts are black with perfidy; and you think that because you pay forty Marks a month you can play with our girls as well! We may not be rich,

but, thank God! we're not dependent on the likes of you! Don't think you're the first one I've turned out! Will you go to-night?"

"Well, if you're bound to be so unreasonable . . ."

The girl peeling potatoes at the sink in the kitchen turned a flushed, tear-stained face towards him, and he caught the glance over the angry woman's shoulder.

"I must look for another place," he said. "I suppose I may stay over the night?"

"Not if you can get out sooner. I'll pack your things while you're out."

Frau Meyer went into the front room, took out of the drawer the well-worn printed sign, and placed it in the window again.

"Wait till your uncle comes home!" she said to the girl. "It's mostly your fault, I've no doubt. If your dress wasn't finished, you'd stay away from the ball for this! He's been one of the best roomers we've ever had; it may be a month before we get another. It wouldn't be more than right if I took the month's rent out of your earnings!"

Before he left that evening, Fritz managed to whisper in her ear: "I'll see you at the ball!"

Frau Meyer did not forget to tell her husband

what had happened, and when Lieschen went to bed that night she spent half an hour before the long mirror in Fritz's room, rubbing lanolin into the red streaks and blue spots on her arms and shoulders—not that she minded the ache and smart of the stripes, for she was used to Prussian discipline, and it was not half so severe at the Meyers as on the Lithuanian farm of her nativity—but she feared the marks might show through the thin fabric of her ball frock. Luckily it was low cut in front only, and the elbow-sleeves would cover at least the upper part of her arms.

* * * *

Lieschen had little difficulty in slipping away from her aunt at the ball for a few words in private with Fritz. The young man led her away to a sofa in a cosy corner, and sat down beside her. That he now had her at his mercy gave him an unfortunate sense of freedom, but he did not mean to abuse his advantage.

He realised how unwise it had been to promise to see her at the ball, and his first idea was simply to stay away, and thus break off. He believed that love was the great thing in a woman's life, but only an incident in that of the lordly male. It had been rather a frequent incident in his,

and seemed to have left no deep traces in his character. But the very obstacles he had met in this case made his interest in Lieschen more intense than it had ever been in any other girl, and for the first time in his experience he thought of her feelings rather than his own. Perhaps no such noble emotion had ever stirred his heart before as when he finally resolved, neither simply to desert her without another word, nor to follow her up to her ruin (an easy matter, to judge from former successes), but to see her and explain to her frankly why they had better part. So he meant to put her at her ease, and then disillusion her as gently as possible; but Prussians are not noted for tact and skill in such matters, and his success was not conspicuous. The very sacrifice he was resolved to make made him disagreeably free, complacent, and patronising.

"How thy little heart doth flutter!" he began, using the familiar form which is employed (as the satirist puts it) in addressing animals, children, and the Deity; and laying his hand on her left side. The girl drew back, startled, and looked at him with wide, half-frightened eyes. Had he been drinking already?

He had never seen her in evening dress before, and as he gazed at the great dark eyes, pink

cheeks framed in black ringlets, delicate throat, and throbbing bosom, his conception of his own nobility in voluntarily foregoing such a delicate morsel almost overpowered him.

"Art thou afraid of me?" he asked. "I would not hurt thee for worlds!"

The helpless girl trembled and blushed under his unblinking stare, and could bring no word to her lips.

"Thou art indeed a peach," he went on, "and the frock suits thee well. But what is that on thy pink little arm?"

He bent over her and turned up the edge of the flimsy, semi-transparent elbow-sleeve in order to see the blue-green spot better. As soon as she saw what he was about, she hastily withdrew her arm, and pulled down the sleeve again.

"Uncle had taken a little too much," she explained, in a matter-of-fact way; "he is always quite gentle when he's sober."

"The brute has actually beaten thee for shaking hands with me?"

He took her by the shoulders, turned her part way around, and scrutinised her back.

"*Gott in Himmel!* The child is covered with bruises! How could the old barbarian strike

such beautiful shoulders? If he were not thine uncle——!"

"Please, don't!" exclaimed the poor girl, slipping out of his grasp and wishing she had brought her shawl. "It's really nothing, only the belt had a metal buckle on it. I thought they wouldn't show through the dress."

She sought cover by nestling up into the corner of the sofa. At the next chance she would jump up and run back to her aunt.

"My poor child!" replied Fritz, "thou hast suffered much for me. If only I could do something for thee!"

Lieschen sat still again. She knew she was a stupid country girl, and could only talk about her dress and her beating.

"Thou knowest I love thee dearly," continued the young man, determined to have the unpleasant business over, "but I cannot marry thee!"

Lieschen was more than ever silent at this. What could she be expected to say?

"Thou knowest my father is a poor man, for an officer. It will be all he can do to give my two sisters their ten thousand Marks each when he has paid for my education. A young attorney cannot begin without capital. He must expect to live some years without earning much. And

my father expects me to marry capital. I have really no choice in the matter."

Lieschen's breast was heaving again, but her lips pressed each other until they were white.

"How much?" she managed to whisper, at last.

"How much, my poor little fluttering bird? How much? Not much as the world goes, but far too much for me and thee. I suppose a hundred thousand Marks is about my price," he added, cynically.

A hundred thousand Marks! Lieschen had just over a thousand in the savings bank. She could hope to save another thousand during the next two years, and her uncle had promised her yet another if she behaved herself, and all went well, when she came to marry. That would be a liberal provision. She did not know that social barriers were beginning to crumble, even in East Prussia, but she had heard of the wonderful marriages effected by Felicitas Junker and her cousin Trudchen. There was also a servant maid on her native farm who had managed to catch a schoolmaster. Lieschen decided to try.

"When will you finish your studies?" she asked. Her voice was quite steady now.

"Call me '*Du*' just once!" he pleaded; "even though we must part for ever."

Lieschen hesitated. It seemed almost blasphemy to call a front room tenant '*Du*.' At last, in a voice that trembled again, "*Wann wirst Du fertig sein?*"

"In two years, my treasure. Why dost thou ask?"

"Perhaps—I hardly know—thou'lt surely not marry before then?"

"Impossible!"

"Then I think I will go. Auntie will be looking for me."

"Wilt thou not stay for one dance with me?"

"Oh, I cannot! You know—I can't dance with my shawl about me."

"Never mind that. No one else will notice it. I would I might kiss each separate spot a hundred times!"

"You mustn't say such naughty things!" exclaimed Lieschen, smiling, nevertheless, for the first time. "They would look none the better for that!"

"But at least I may kiss thy rosebud mouth? Just once?"

She held it up to him, and then flew away.

* * * *

Fritz Sonnenschein felt notably depressed for several days after the ball. His new landlady did not take care of him as Frau Meyer had done, and there was no soft-voiced, silent-footed little girl moving about. But he soon got used to the new conditions, challenged a medical student to a duel to relieve his feelings, got his nose slit up for his pains, and forgot all about Lieschen Reimer.

Six months passed.

Then one morning the old porter at the University handed him a letter that had been lying about unclaimed for several days. It asked him to meet her at a restaurant in the *Tiergarten* that very afternoon.

Fritz went to the place for his lunch, and sat over a second glass of beer waiting for her. After a time he fetched a newspaper from the rack, and did not look up again until he heard a stifled exclamation from the next table, "*Gott!* What a beauty! Who is it?"

Lieschen stood a few yards away, looking calmly over the room for her friend. She had on a wide, white picture-hat, a white summer dress, cut with a deep V at the neck according to the vogue that had just reached Königsberg, and her pure complexion, untouched as yet by

the spring sun that had browned the faces of the ladies all about, lent a dazzling brilliance to the radiant vision. Fritz sat, for a moment, spell-bound. Half a dozen of the nearest cavaliers leaned tensely forward, ready to spring to her side at the first sign. But uncertain yet as to her status, they ventured no impertinence.

Fritz rose to greet her in his best manner, and conducted her deferentially to a more secluded spot.

"So you haven't forgotten me?" he asked, beginning to recover from his astonishment. She looked at him with a surprised question in her eyes.

"Do you forget so easily?" she asked, at last.

Fritz was astonished again at the easy certainty of her manner.

"No," he replied, a little confused, "but I had heard nothing from you."

"Nor I from you."

"I thought our last interview was final, but from your appearance to-day—what is your news?"

"I'm not sure that I ought to tell you."

"Why not?"

"Do you remember all you said in our last interview?"

"I believe I do."

"I simply have taken you at your word."

"You may always take a man of honour at his word!"

"When Herr Koslowski told me the other day I had better look you up or I should find that some other girl had run off with you, I laughed at him."

"Well, you were right. I give you my word of honour I haven't looked at a girl since you so completely spoiled me for the ordinary sort. Who is this Herr Koslowski?"

"Have you ever thought of me during these long months?"

"What a question! I haven't been able to get your picture out of my mind for a day at a time!"

Lieschen sat still for a moment, musingly regarding him.

"I was beginning to wonder whether I had not better have accepted Herr Koslowski's offer, after all."

"Aren't you going to tell me what it was?"

"Well, perhaps you will remember telling me that you could not marry a girl unless she had a hundred thousand Marks."

"I believe I did say something of the sort."

"Oh, so it was just a little joke then, or a ruse to get rid of me?"

"Do be sensible, Lieschen! You know, if I was ever earnest in my life, I was then. I really tried to do the right thing by you. But you look so tempting now, that I've half made up my mind to marry you anyway, if you will still have me, without any loaves and fishes at all!"

"Well, that won't be necessary. See what I've brought to show you!"

She took from her reticule a hundred thousand Marks in City of Berlin four and one-half per cent. bonds, and laid them on the little table before him.

"Count them!" she said.

"By all the gods! How in thunder-weather did you get these?"

"It's a long story. If you care to hear it, let's walk through the *Tiergarten*. I'm too happy to eat anything."

As they passed out many eyes looked jealously at the lucky young student who had captured such a handsome convoy.

"I'll begin at the beginning," she said. "When you told me you could not marry a poor girl, I made up my mind to go out and earn more money

than I could at Uncle's, and save it up. That morning I had been cleaning out the old cupboard in your room, and I remembered an advertisement I had seen in a newspaper. It was in the 'marriage' column, and asked for a young woman to be housekeeper for an elderly gentleman, saying that the work was light, the pay good, and there was prospect of eventual marriage. Of course, I didn't care anything for the last part of it."

"*Du lieber Himmel!*" exclaimed Fritz; "you didn't go to such a place as that?"

"I went the next day!"

"You're not a widow already?" exclaimed Fritz, looking down at her gloved hands. She removed the glove and held up her fingers for his inspection.

"You shall have a ring as soon as we get to Rosenthals!" said Fritz.

"I had rather a time with Auntie, but the house is in a respectable street, and as I promised to bring her my money every month to save up for me, she finally consented. I thought that if the work was light, I might sew umbrellas as well, and thus make double wages. The story is rather a funny one, but I suppose I may tell you, seeing you are really my *Braütigam*, are you not, Herr Sonnenschein?"

"You must call me 'Fritz!'" said the young man, pressing her hand.

"Well, Fritzchen!" she laughed, nestling her arm closer in his, "I'm so happy that I can't think of anything but you! . . . When I got to the place, a frowsy woman met me at the door.

"'I've come to see about the housekeeper's place,' said I. She looked at me for a moment and then burst into a laugh.

"'You take my tip,' she said, 'and get out of here as soon as you can. This is no place for you!'

"She was closing the door in my face when I heard a gruff, man's voice say from within, 'Let the lady in, I tell you! It will be worse for you if you don't!'

"'It will be bad for *you*, baby,' whispered the woman, 'if you *do* come in!' but she stood aside to let me pass.

"'Come upstairs,' said the voice; 'I'm sorry my infirmities do not permit me to receive you properly.'

"I found myself in a large, well furnished, but very untidy bedroom. An old man lay in a reclining chair, one foot swathed in flannels and supported on a high stool. We talked a little while, and I found that Frau Margot, as

he called the woman, was the real housekeeper, and what he wanted was a personal attendant. He seemed to like me very well, and when I asked him about the wages, he said we shouldn't quarrel about that, and when I told him I must know definitely, we settled on a hundred Marks a month, which was twice as much as I expected.

"I got on very well with him at first, but then he began to have strange fits. I had to sleep in the room next to his, and leave my door open so I could wake him when he had bad dreams. He often cried out 'Murder!' in his sleep, and then it was hard to quiet him. I don't think he was always quite right in his head. One night he came stumbling into my room, walking in his sleep, and gave me such a fright! It took me half an hour to coax him back again. Sometimes he would make me sit on the edge of his bed in the dark—for the light hurt his head—and he would make long speeches in Polish, or some other language, that I didn't understand. He bought me a dressing-gown, with wide kimono sleeves that were always getting into things and so open in front that I was ashamed to show myself in it, but he made me wear it all the time.

"But the worst fit he had was when he wanted to marry me. It was a long time before I could

get that out of his head. At last I had to tell him I would leave if he mentioned it again.

"One day, about two months ago, when he gave me my pay, he put in twenty Marks extra and told me to buy him a couple of lottery tickets. On the way to Auntie's I tried to figure out how long it would take me to save a hundred thousand Marks at eighty or ninety a month. I never could figure, but I saw it would take a long time. So I begged Auntie to let me have ten Marks for myself, and then I bought a lottery ticket too. I couldn't decide which one to take for myself, so I gave them all to Herr Koslowski, and told him to give me one. He was very angry with me for buying one for myself, and said I would surely have all the luck. He made me choose one, and then another, and then he gave me the last one I hadn't chosen.

"I haven't told you yet about Frau Margot and her son, Hans. She was most uncivil to me from the first, and threatened to kill me if I tried to marry Herr Koslowski. The son was rude, too—a big, lazy lout, always hanging about with seemingly nothing to do—but I didn't mind his rudeness so much as when he began to make love to me. I never went down stairs if I could help it—indeed, I've only been out of the house

about once a month until last week, when she left. Hans often tried my door at night, and once he climbed up to my window from the garden, and I had to bang the sash on his fingers before he would go.

"When I told Herr Koslowski about it, he gave me a loaded revolver, and made me keep it on my table. I was so afraid of it that I couldn't sleep for two nights, and I always dusted the table carefully around it so as not to touch it. Herr Koslowski told me to shoot through the keyhole if Hans came again, for he would be sure to have his eye or ear there!

"A week ago yesterday a lawyer called on Herr Koslowski, and was with him for a long time. I was in the room some of the time, but did not understand much of what they talked about, but I noticed Frau Margot listening in the corridor several times. They also read some papers, and Herr Koslowski had to sign them.

"That night I slept soundly, and was beginning to wonder in my dreams why Herr Koslowski didn't call me, when I suddenly found myself sitting bolt upright in bed, wide awake. The first thing I noticed was that the door between my room and Herr Koslowski's was closed, and a light shone through the keyhole. I

was out of bed in an instant, but the door was locked!

"I called out to him, but Frau Margot's voice answered back, telling me to be quiet, or I should be a 'dead kitten.' Then I heard her say to Hans, 'I told you the girl would spoil the whole thing. You ought to have disposed of her first.'

"I don't know how it happened, or how I managed to do it, but I pressed the revolver against the keyhole, and it went off with an awful bang. Frau Margot screamed, and I heard them scuffle into the corridor. I got out of my room just in time to see them tumbling down the stairs together in a frightful tangle of legs and arms and hair and petticoats.

"Before I could get into Herr Koslowski's room, I had smelt the chloroform, and I found a cloth, wet with it, over his face, and a large bottle stood open on the table. At first, of course, I thought he was dead, but his heart was beating. I opened all the windows, and soon he began to talk. He knew exactly what had happened, and showed me where they had tried, without success, to open the safe at the head of his bed.

"He told me I had saved his life, although, perhaps, they had only wanted to steal money or papers. He hoped they were gone for good,

but they weren't. After a while I heard groans down stairs, and found Frau Margot lying on the kitchen floor, where her son had left her, with a broken arm and a bruised head. I 'phoned for a doctor, who soon fixed her up so that she could get about.

"By that time it was morning, and Herr Koslowski called her up to him. He had been writing and working among his papers for more than an hour.

"'You know,' he said, 'that I can get you two or three years for this?'

"'It's all your fault,' she answered sulkily; 'why would you bring in this silly girl?'

"'Now, see here!' he answered, 'this makes us quits, and you must go. I have settled an annuity of two thousand Marks a year on your villain son. . . .'

"'Your son too, don't forget!' she said.

"'God knows if it be so!' he went on. 'Nevertheless, here are the papers. You must get on with that. If you ever come back here, the law shall have you. Go!'

"I soon found another housekeeper, and we settled down again.

"Two days later, when I took his letters up to him, I noticed that one of the registered ones had

a Russian stamp on it. When I came down again, I found the paper had come with the lottery result. The number of my ticket was just one less than the hundred thousand Marks prize! It's always that way. I don't think they sell the ticket with the right number on it. But I had at least the comfort of knowing that Herr Koslowski's tickets had drawn no prizes either, for I had taken down the numbers when I still remembered them. Of course, I was terribly disappointed, and felt like crying, for the ten Marks was lost.

"Then I heard Herr Koslowski suddenly shout, 'At last, at last!' I ran upstairs to see what the matter was.

"'Good news, Lieschen!' he cried. 'My old uncle at Warsaw—he's twenty years older than I, and I thought he would never die—is gone at last, and has left me five hundred thousand Roubles—that's more than a million Marks, my dear. You are my good angel! You've saved my life, and helped me get rid of those people just in time. Margot would certainly have opened the letter, and plagued me to death for more plunder.'

"I think I wasn't feeling very well that morning, and then the lottery business had upset me,

and when I thought of Herr Koslowski, with already more money than he knew what to do with, and already half-dead, getting all the pile, that couldn't do him a bit of good, and myself working so hard for a few *lumpige* Marks, I just began to cry, and ran into my own room.

" Herr Koslowski came hopping in after me—he had not tried to walk for a month—and asked me what the trouble was. Then I told him the whole story—why I had come to him and why I had bought the lottery ticket, and that now it was all over, I was tired of it, and was going home to Auntie.

" But he wouldn't hear of that—said I was the ' Star of his life,' and had made a new man of him. He said he owed me something for saving his life, and made me 'phone to his broker at once, and before the next evening I had these in my hands. But first he made me promise to stay with him until the end, and he says he will leave me all his property—he has no relatives—and I think I ought to stay, Fritzchen, not that I want the money, although I would gladly be rich for your sake, but he has been so different of late—so gentle and polite and not at all rude like he used to be, that I've almost fallen in love

with him. You know I never had a father, Fritz, and he's just like a father to me now.

"He asked me to let him see one of your letters, for he said he could judge character by handwriting, and when I told him you had never written to me, and I had not heard from you for months, he called me a foolish little silly, and told me to look you up or I should find my bird had flown. And now I suppose you'll make fun of me, Fritzchen dear, because I've tried so hard to get the money so that I could marry you?"

Fritz walked along beside her, silent, sunk in deep thoughts of his own. All his familiar, patronising manner was gone. He did not even venture to press the little, white-gloved hand that lay so confidingly on his arm. Only his fundamental obtuseness of perception and want of sincerity to himself prevented him from kneeling down before her and crying out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" He knew that only the strength and innocence of a pure love could have carried the girl safely through the hideous peril she had so unwittingly faced.

"Do you truly love me, Fritz?" asked the girl, disturbed by his unwonted silence.

"Lieschen," he replied, in a noble effort to be frank for once in his life, "I never knew what

love was. You have taught me some things this afternoon. If you will take me, I shall try to learn of you, for surely you are the sweetest and purest angel that ever visited earth."

"If you always talk to me that way, I shall die of pure joy!" exclaimed Lieschen, making half-a-dozen ecstatic little jumps. "But now I must say 'good-bye' and catch the next tram back to the *Vorstadt*, and tell Auntie before I go back. But I am free every Sunday afternoon, and you can come to fetch me at Auntie's, can't you, Fritzchen? And when the weather is fine we can walk in the parks, and when it isn't, you'll take me to a concert, won't you, Fritzchen? Come, here is a shady little alcove where we can wait until the tram comes. Oh, I'm so happy I don't know what to do with myself! I've been running about or sitting still in that big, dark, old house for months and months, with hardly a smell of sunshine, and now I feel as though I had jumped clean into Heaven! Fritzchen! Do you really love me? See, I've fixed myself up as best I could to please you. Madame Louise said this is the dinkiest dress in Königsberg, and I spent a whole month's wages on it without even asking Auntie. But you don't seem to take any notice of it!"

Fritz had seated himself on the little bench, but Lieschen could not be still for a second. She went through a light-toed little tattoo in a semi-circle round him. Her dark eyes sparkled, and every limb quivered with ecstatic thrills.

"Good-bye, then!" she said, a little mournfully, as the tram sounded round the corner. Fritz jumped up from his seat. No one was in sight, so he gave her the hearty squeeze and thorough kissing she was waiting for, and set her on the tram.

IN THE FRAUENKLINIK

WHEN Frau Gretchen had been married four years she had three children, and there were signs that a fourth might be en route. Outwardly her physical mechanism seemed to have stood the terrible drain on her strength very well. Her cheeks were still plump and rosy, her eyes bright and sparkling, and she was still full of *lebenslust* (joy of life). But she suffered much pain at times, and her husband finally decided to send her to the women's hospital for an examination.

The assistant physician under whose hands she first came made a rather serious face, and ordered her into the hospital for treatment. Now there are three classes in Prussian hospitals. In the first, each patient has a separate room, and pays seven shillings a day; in the second there are four in each ward, the price being four shillings daily; while in the third, ten or twelve are together, the daily rate being one-and-six for such as are not absolute paupers.

Gretchen's husband was earning good wages, but Gretchen was a thrifty soul, and, thinking of the coming needs of her growing children, she chose the third class. Her mother took the children home, and cooked for them and their father, so that in the end she saved money rather than lost by going to the hospital.

So Frau Gretchen suddenly found herself permanently established in the third spotless bed of the long row in the equally spotless ward, with nothing to do but lie still, gossip with her neighbours, and read novels—which the reluctant nurse could be teased or tipped into bringing from the hospital library—and nothing to look forward to but her husband's weekly visits, and an occasional more or less painful treatment or examination by some new doctor.

The nurse at first in charge of the ward was an ill-natured Pomeranian, who seldom came for the daily round of treatments until nine o'clock in the evening, and then hurried through them in a most perfunctory fashion, to the great discontent of all the patients. She was soon succeeded, however, by a sunny-faced, yellow-haired, little angel from Bingen on the Rhine, who, by some strange mischance, had been transplanted from her native vineyards clear across the empire to

the bleak snows of East Prussia. She always arrived punctually at eight o'clock, told each patient individually how much better she was looking, and spent two full hours over the douches and fomentations and compresses, leaving them all refreshed and happy and cheerful for the rest of the day.

Frau Gretchen's neighbour to the left was a very pretty little dark-haired Russian Jewess of about thirty, who had been married for ten years, and was under treatment for childlessness. According to the Russian-Jewish custom, her husband could, and doubtless would, divorce her if she bore him no children during the first ten years of marriage. Her period was nearly expired. She was in terrible earnest, and prayed every day the desperate cry, "Give me children, or I die!" She received every day a painful internal hot-air douche, and tumbled out of bed with pitiful alacrity every morning when her doctor came in, bearing the torture without a whimper. The doctor did his best to encourage her, and promised her faithfully that the treatment would be successful.

"Only another month!" he would say to her, "and then you go back to Riga to your husband. And within a twelvemonth you shall present to

him a wonderful pair of twins, both fine, healthy, kicking boys, with black hair and black eyes, and plump little red arms and legs ! "

The poor woman took him at his word and beamed radiantly at the glorious prospect ; and the other patients were too sympathetic to join in the doctor's laugh.

Frau Gretchen's other neighbour was a poor woman with cancers in each breast, who was trying to gain strength enough for an operation. She suffered terrible pain and could not always suppress her groans. A few days after Frau Gretchen's arrival, a little group of doctors and nurses came into the ward one afternoon, pushing the fatal trolley, chatting and whistling and singing as they transferred the dying woman to the dreaded car, and wheeled her out of the room.

" *Adjö, adjö* ! " she wailed feebly. " I know I shall never see you again ! Many, many thanks for all your kindnesses to a poor, old woman ! "

The patients wept in chorus at the sad farewell. They never heard of her again, but conjectured rightly that she had not survived the operation.

Among the charity patients was a young girl

of sixteen who was well enough to be about, but suffered from an unusual growth of little tumours. She paid nothing, had been there for months, and was commonly known as the *Versuchskaninchen* (experiments-rabbit), for the surgeon-in-chief had already operated on her three times, apparently without success.

One afternoon the door of the ward was suddenly burst open by a little group of nurses, and at the tensely whispered warning, "*Inspektion! Der Herr Geheimrat kommt!*" the patients subsided into their beds, while the nurses hastily smoothed their coverlets, sprayed them liberally with disinfectant and eucalyptus, and hurried on to the next ward. Then they heard the heavy tread of the approaching surgeon-in-chief, and presently he entered the ward, followed by a large group of physicians and nurses, all trembling lest something wrong should be discovered. *Herr Geheimrat Professor Doktor* Winterfeld was the tyrant and terror of the hospital. He had been recently made a *Geheimrat* (privy-counsellor) on account of his discoveries of new methods for treating women's diseases, and no one in the hospital durst approach him save with fear and trembling openly manifested in face and manner. He was absolute lord and master over a score of

able physicians and a hundred nurses, and arbiter of life and death to a thousand patients.

He stopped a moment at Gretchen's bed and read the description of her case that hung in the frame above. Gretchen looked at the harsh, hard features of the grizzled giant and trembled, for she could see neither pity nor remorse there. The heavy, white moustache was waxed fiercely upwards at the ends, and the dark, blue eyes looked cold as a frozen sea.

" Make a note that I shall examine Frau . . . Frau Bodenbinder—what a damnably bad hand you have, Schweinicke !—to-morrow afternoon," said the *Geheimrat*, and passed on to the next bed.

" What's this ? " he growled, in a louder voice, " sprained ankle ? "

" The emergency ward was full," explained one of the house-surgeons, with eager, conciliatory deference, " and as this bed happened to be empty—Frau Rutschuck, the double cancer case, was taken out day before yesterday—I took the liberty of asking Doktor Schweinicke to admit her here."

The reference to the unsuccessful cancer operation did not improve the great man's humour.

" Let's have a look at it ! "

Two trembling nurses turned down the bed-clothes in a second, and unwound the long bandage with fervid haste. He took the foot in his hand and looked at it.

"Swelling almost disappeared," he remarked, and gave the injured ankle a sudden twist that brought a sharp cry of anguish from the girl.

"Hurts a little yet, does it?" he enquired. Then to the house-surgeon: "The other foot's all right. Get her a crutch and send her home. The hospital is no place for little cuts and bruises and sprains, as I've told you a thousand times before!"

Then they went on to the next ward.

The next day, after a painful examination, Frau Gretchen took the liberty of asking a question.

"Herr Professor!" she said, not thinking of his new *Geheimrat* title, "What's the matter with me?"

The attendant nurses paled at this unheard-of temerity. The surgeon himself did not understand the question at first as being addressed to him, but looked up to see which of the professors had entered the room. Then he growled back: "I'll tell you when I find out; not before!"

Two days later Gretchen was removed to the second class, although she still paid third class

rates only. She didn't like this, and redoubled her efforts to find out what was the matter with her. The house-surgeon told her that hers was a strange case, and that the *Herr Geheimrat* would probably examine her again in a few days. Then she asked Sister Margarita (all German nurses are called by their Christian names, with the title of " Sister ") if she knew why they were making such a fuss about her. Under promise of inviolable secrecy, the nurse finally told her she thought there would be an operation.

" I heard the *Herr Geheimrat* say to Doctor Schweinicke that it would be a mercy to operate, for you had had three children in three years," she confessed.

Gretchen did not propose to be operated on, and began to wonder why the house-surgeon kept on assuring her that she was not with child, although she recognised all the signs in herself. So when she was wheeled into the general room for another examination, a few days later, she was tense with suspicion and ready to resist.

" You will be put under anæsthetic," explained the surgeon who prepared her, " for the examination may be very painful. But don't worry. It will be all right."

Just before the black cap descended over her

face, however, the wide door at the end of the room swung open for a moment, and she caught a glimpse of the tiered benches of the operating chamber, crowded with young students. She sprang from the trolley with a loud shriek. She did not intend to be operated on, nor to expose herself to the gaze of a hundred young men. Neither would she be a *Versuchskaninchen.* Clad only in her night-dress, she fled towards the other door, fighting off the horrified nurses and pursuing doctors on the way, and arrived at last, with scratched face and torn garment, in her ward, where she hastily began to dress herself. She could hear the confusion in the examination-room, and the voice of the *Herr Geheimrat* roaring down the corridor, "Out with her! Let her never set foot within the building again!"

Sister Margarita helped her dress, and told her she was the bravest woman she had ever met. At the office below, where she paid what was still due, Doctor Schweinicke met her and offered her further treatment in his own private clinic, but she politely declined.

The next afternoon she went to see *Professor Doktor Müller*, a brilliant young surgeon, who had formerly been connected with the university, but, having quarrelled violently with *Geheimrat*

Winterfeld, resigned, and set up a large private clinic of his own. He had married a rich Jewess, and with the aid of her capital had built up an enormous practice. He specialised in rational methods, such as electricity and water treatments, and had effected so many wonderful cures of cases discharged as hopeless from the hospital that he enjoyed a wide reputation and commanded the highest fees, although he also received charity patients, and made no secret of the fact that he charged altogether according to the circumstances of the patient.

After examining Gretchen, he made her a brief speech: "Frau Bodenbinder, you are twenty-five years old. You have a good constitution, and will most likely live another forty or fifty years. It is for you to choose now whether you will spend this time in moderate comfort and health, or whether you will pass away the years in pain and sickness. Of course, you are with child. Any fool could see that. But all your abdominal organs are deeply and chronically congested, from too heavy work and too frequent child-bearing. You must go to bed and stay there for three months, taking such simple water treatments as will gradually allay the inflammation. Then you may get up and

take a little daily exercise, to gain strength for the coming child-birth. After that, you must have no more children for at least five years. I'll fix you up as far as that's concerned. Mind you do as I say, and a year from to-day you will be a well woman. If you don't obey me to the letter, I'll never come near you again, nor lift a finger to help you! So beware!"

When Gretchen told the story of her adventure at the hospital, he laughed until his sides ached.

"Served him right!" he exclaimed. "I'll warrant you the old tartar hasn't had such a *blamage* for twenty years. It's a clear case of conspiracy and malpractice, and I'd be glad to go into the witness box against him, but our quarrel is already notorious, and all the hospital surgeons who depend on his good pleasure would stand by him. Moreover, you've avenged yourself more completely by flouting the old tyrant to his face in the presence of all his satellites than you could in any other way. I congratulate you, Frau Bodenbinder! You may be sure they'll not forget you at the hospital. And I'm your friend for ever, only you must do exactly what I tell you!"

JULY, 1914.

"CHILDREN, children!" called Frau Meyer; "come into the kitchen. Look at the sun!"

From the kitchen window they could see over the roofs of the sea of houses, to where the crimson sun was setting in a sky of blood.

That morning the news of the Serajevo murder had come.

"Children, there'll be a great war. I've been noticing the sunsets for weeks, and they've all been like that. Now I know what it means. It was just the same way in the summer of 1870. Your grandfather pointed it out, and prophesied war before the end of the year. We all laughed at him, but it came soon enough, like lightning from a clear sky. And he told us there would be another war. He never believed in Bismarck's blood and iron, and said his German Empire would one day be so small that it could hide itself

under a fig tree. Oh, children! There'll be an awful war! I've felt it coming for a long time. We're too proud and increased in goods. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Pray for your husbands, that they find not early graves in distant lands! Pray for yourselves that you may not be widows before the year's end! Pray for your children, that they be not orphans. Oh, children! Germany will be a land of orphans and widows before the year is over. See the blood in the sky! We have never had such sunsets since 1870!"

During the fateful days that followed the English student got his things together, ready for instant flight. There were hopes and fears, and the educated classes all felt sure that anything like a great war would be avoided. But the common people dreaded Russia. "Russia will attack us and stab us in the back," was the phrase on every working man's lips. Social democracy and its ideals withered away before the fear of Russia, the land of might and mystery.

When the general mobilisation bugle sounded in Königsberg, scenes tragic and comic could

be witnessed in every street. Everywhere men were tearing themselves away from wives and mothers, pressing last reserves of money into their fingers, whispering hasty final directions as to how and whence to flee if the worst should come. Here and there corpulent reserve officers ran half-dressed through the streets, struggling in vain with belts and braces, which they had long since outgrown, carrying the waistcoats and jackets on their arms; for a minute's tardiness in answering such a call was inexcusable.

Still some people hoped; and among them the English student, who stayed until the morning papers came out black with "War declared against France and Russia!" Then he packed his bags and went to the station.

The air was already full of rumours of the Russian advance. Hundreds of the inhabitants from the frontier towns had arrived during the night, bringing with them the wildest reports:

"Millions of Russian troops massed just beyond the border!" "Memel bombarded!" "Russians marching on Gumbinnen!" "Pilkallen pillaged and burnt!" "Lithuanians welcome

the invader and plunder German farms!" "Inhabitants of Goldapp massacred to a man!"

The older men in the crowds around the station fumed and swore as trainload after trainload of splendid Prussian troops rolled out of the station towards Berlin, on their way to the unthreatened and infinitely distant Belgian frontier.

"Let the Bavarians and Rhinelanders look after themselves!" was the muttered growl, which threatened to break out into open clamour. The semi-official report that strong detachments of Silesian and Polish troops from Posen were moving into East Prussia by way of Allenstein only excited the anger and derision of the mob.

At last there was a passenger train for Berlin, and the English student, by the help of his friend, *Herr Obergepäckträger Meyer*, succeeded in getting a seat in it. At Herr Meyer's advice, he took only such luggage as he could carry himself, for there were hardly any porters, and the registration system had broken down completely.

"If you once lose sight of it, you'll hardly see it again," said Herr Meyer, and the enormous

pile of unclaimed and undigested luggage which overflowed the cloakroom reinforced his warning.

The *Personen-zug* progressed but slowly. It had to make way for every military train that wanted to pass. After a few hours they began to meet hilarious trainloads of soldiers coming in the opposite direction, bound not for Königsberg, but for more threatened places on the Polish-Russian frontier.

It took thirty hours to reach Berlin, the usual time being ten. There was another long wait for a train to the Dutch frontier, but when it started at last, it made a fairly good run to Hanover. For the rest of the way there were long halts at almost every station, and finally the train stopped altogether at Wesel.

By means of discreet, non-committal enquiries, the English student discovered that English subjects were being held up at the border, in anticipation of an immediate declaration of war against England, so he bought a second-hand bicycle, fastened what was left of his luggage up behind, and cycled down the excellent road that runs along the Rhine some thirty miles to the Dutch frontier. Here, of course, he was

stopped, but it was an out-of-the-way place, and the German sentry, on the look-out chiefly for military deserters, was puzzled and mystified by the English passport. The Dutch officials across the road kindly assured him that it was all right, so the English student escaped Ruhleben by a narrow margin of a few hours, getting back to his own country with what was stored in his mind, and literally nothing else.

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There they have lived for the most part in a tiny cellar, shelled again and again, not taking off their clothes for weeks on end, eating what they could get and thankful for the rough rations of the men. Then when the cellar was swamped out they moved to another tumble-down cottage, only to be shelled out twice more.

King Albert himself has bestowed on them the Order of Leopold II.; they are now Chevaliers, and entitled to have the soldiers present arms to them. Besides this, in the midst of that shot-torn village, romance visited them, and the elder of the two, a young widow, became the Baroness Harold de T'Serclaes.

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